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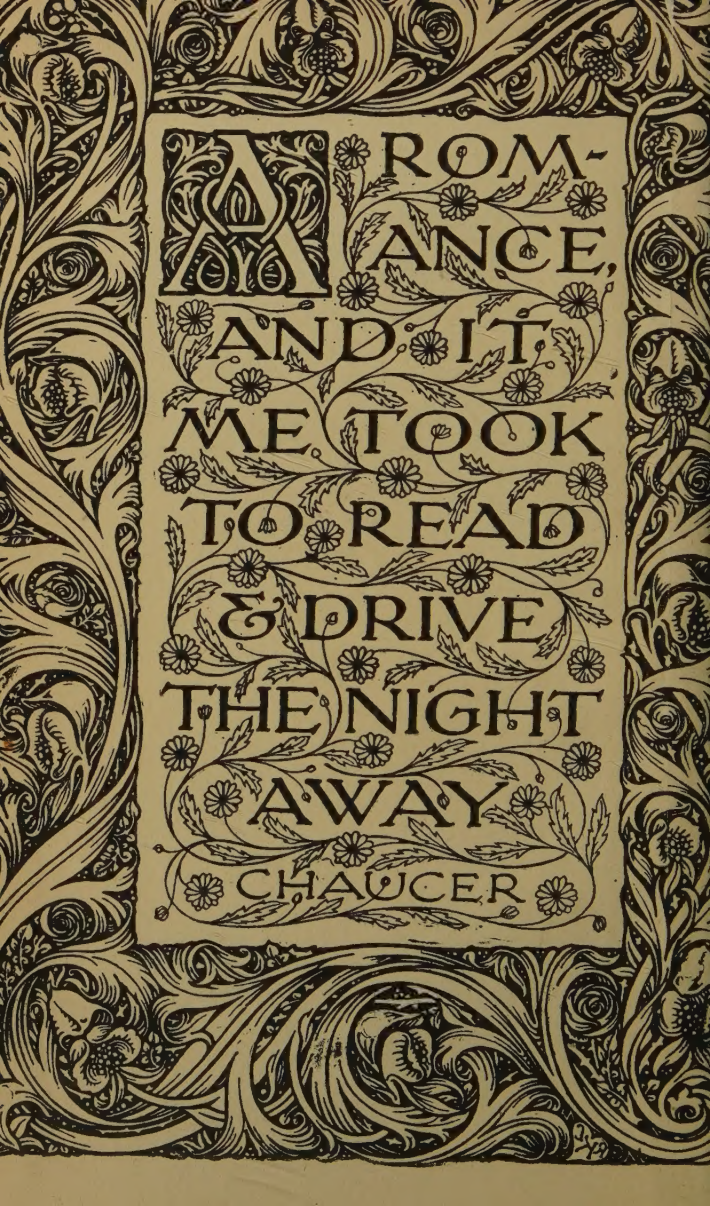
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ANCE,
AND IT
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TO READ
& DRIVE
THE NIGHT
AWAY
CHAUCER

THE ADVENTURES of GIL BLAS of SANTILLANE

VOLUME ONE

10 MAY 1961

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INTRODUCTION

THE Peninsula of Rhuys which encloses to the East the small inland sea, known as the Gulf of Morbihan,[1] is one of the districts of the "bas-breton" speaking portion of Brittany, which, owing to its remoteness from the railway, has most completely preserved its old-world physiognomy and primitive quaintness. There, on the summit of that lonely promontory, stand the remains of the monastery of Saint Gildas, that numbered Abelard for a while among its abbots; there, silhouetted against the vast horizon of the sea, and looking down on a melancholy stretch of salt marsh, rise the majestic ruins of the Castle of Sucinio, the favourite residence of Isabella of Scotland, wife of François I, the last duke but one of Brittany; and there, too, hidden in a fold of the wooded landscape, is the straggling old village of Sarzeau, which was privileged, two hundred and forty-two years ago, to give birth to the one who may, perhaps, be considered, after Molière, the most versatile of the great French writers. I am speaking of Alain-René Lesage.

The antiquated stage-cart, which still serves for the carriage of the mails—and of passengers too, should there chance to be any—between Vannes and Sarzeau, is, I should imagine, the direct descendant of the one into which the future author of GIL BLAS hoisted himself on the day when the Fates dragged him forth from the obscurity of his native village to despatch him on the road to glory. It bears you away, to the trot of its two old hacks, along the Eastern shore of the Gulf—that marvel of shifting colours—which sends its waters, by innumerable creeks and inlets, far into the heart of the country, which they hollow and carve to what shape they please. And so we have to cross three or four stray arms of the sea, genuine miniature fiords, lost amid the waste lands or the green fields. Here and there, along the route, we come to a few scattered

[1] *Mor*, in Armorican Breton, signifies Mer (*sea*) and *bihan*, petite (*little*).

there he passed his childhood and grew up to early manhood. Until the age of seventeen, he never went beyond the confines of his home except to keep his college terms at Vannes, and here among his fellow students who, like himself, had flocked in from the surrounding country districts, he came in contact with the same spirit and breathed the same atmosphere as in his own village. We may picture him, therefore, as a Breton youth, three-fourths a peasant, strolling about the fields and along the shore with the other village boys, joining in their games, steeping himself in their traditions, adopting their manner of thought and sentiment, and—I may add—speaking their language. For there can be no doubt that the Breton dialect was the everyday, and, probably, the exclusive, speech in his youth, of the writer who was in later years to become such a consummate master of the French language. Even after he had been uprooted from his native soil and was signing himself "Lesage, bourgeois de Paris," he still borrowed expressions from the idiom of his childhood in playful intercourse with his children. We have proof of this in the nickname of "Pittenec," or rather "Pittennec," which he bestowed on François-Antoine, the youngest of his three sons, who was so accustomed to being styled in this manner by his father, that he adopted the name for his professional pseudonym when he went on the stage. It is a jocose epithet, which the young Breton peasants are fond of bandying with one another, probably without any sense of its true meaning, which is too undisguisedly Rabelaisian to be given here.

Brought up among such purely Celtic surroundings, it was inevitable that Lesage should contract those habits, or rather I should say, those natural tendencies of thought and feeling, which have been looked upon, from all time, as the distinctive characteristics of his compatriots. All that we know of his moral physiognomy confirms this idea. Born of a religious race, though at times he may indulge in jokes about the ignorance of the clergy and their extreme love of good cheer, he clings, nevertheless, in that age of unbelief, to the instincts of faith, and does not even lose his taste for the marvellous, as we see in Gil Blas. His fatherly preference did not fall on either of the two sons who went on the stage, but on the third, who entered the Church; he retired in his old age to live

near the latter, thus realizing as a father the dream of every Breton mother, which is to have a son in the priesthood and to die under his roof.

As far as we can judge, Lesage conformed throughout his life to the Breton ideal of conduct. While other provincials had no sooner landed from the coach and set foot on the pavement of Paris than they made all the haste possible to rid themselves of any clinging particles of their native soil, Alain-René, the refractory son of Morbihan, stuck obstinately to the principles and habits of his home country.

Married, and the father of a family, more in love with domestic joys than with worldly success, he settled down at an early age in his home in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, to a simple and regular life, differing appreciably but little from that which he had led under the parental roof in the Rue Bécherel. He was too sane of head and too proud of heart for Paris ever to intoxicate or enslave him. We know his reply to the Duchesse de Bouillon, one of the great ladies whose patronage would have been invaluable in helping to get his *Turcaret* put on the stage. He was engaged to give a reading of his play at her house. Punctuality is not one of the Celtic virtues, and Lesage arrived far behind the appointed time. The duchess received him haughtily, complaining in arrogant tones that he had caused her to lose a whole hour. "Do not trouble, Madame; I will now help you to gain two," was the Breton's composed rejoinder, as, repocketing his manuscript, he bowed to the astonished lady, and made his way downstairs. An individualist to the core, as are all Celts, he would not suffer the slightest infringement of his dignity as a man, and thereby set an unusual lesson of independence to the generality of the writers of his day. Unlike them, it is true, he did not "rise" and grow rich, for he lived a poor man and died in obscurity. "He succeeded," said Brunetière,[1] "in getting on bad terms with all the men who at that time were the dispensers of favour and fortune: courtiers, financiers, actors and even literary men." "Not that he was a philosopher," adds the same critic, "or one fond of airing overbold ideas." Far from it. At the same time he did not consider that a man had a right to sacrifice his ideas to any thing or

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person whatsoever, and to him no worldly advantage was worth buying at the cost of the things which belong to the soul. In other words, on this point, as on so many others, he shewed himself a true Breton, jealously loyal to the idealistic traditions of his race.

* * * * * * *

And this being so, how are we to explain the fact that this idealist, so proudly indifferent to circumstance, became the creator, in France, of the realistic novel, the acknowledged precursor of Balzac and Flaubert? For it is clear that the distance between Sarzeau and Santillane is not greater than that which separates Lesage's Psychology from that of Gil Blas. Are we, therefore, to conclude that there was a complete divorce between the man and his work? All literary historians hold this opinion, which is shared by Brunetière himself, who, having first brought out in full relief the unquestionably Breton personality of Lesage, adds the following modifying statement in a note: "Nevertheless, nothing could be less *Breton* than his work, as nothing could be more classic of its kind, or show less mingling of fancy with the wholly Latin genius that inspired it."

But is it certain that Brittany finds no place in Gil Blas, to speak only of this novel which is Lesage's chief title to the admiration of posterity? We may put aside the Spanish setting; every one knows well enough that Spain, in which country the author had never even set foot, was only introduced here as so much borrowed scenery. That which the author really desired to paint, that which he did paint—and who could have done it with greater accuracy, with more fidelity to Nature!—apart from certain episodes culled here and there from books—were the scenes which he had himself witnessed, the types of men he had come across, the ways and manners familiar to him in everyday life. Nor is it to be doubted that recollections of his youthful days in Brittany often haunted his memory as he sat at work. Does not Rolando, for instance, that famous brigand, the leader of "the brave band of men who levied forced contributions from travellers," bear the name of a Sarzeau attorney, against whose rapacity Lesage, as a child, had heard those about him utter their anathemas? Then there is old Uncle Gil Perez, the ecclesiastic who thought

only of living well, that is of good living, and who would have ended by forgetting his letters, if he had not undertaken to teach them to Gil Blas; in him we trace more than one trait of resemblance with the good Breton pastors of the seventeenth century, who benevolently burdened themselves with the preliminary education of the children of their rural parishes who were destined for college, endeavouring to instil into their minds the rudiments of Latin which they had never succeeded in learning themselves. And how many other undoubted reminiscences could I not recall! Read, for example, the description of the beggars in Chapter V, that "vagabond crew that lead a tolerably happy life," was there a road, or a *Pardon* in his native peninsula where he had not met similar figures! . . .

I must pass on quickly to my next point. In spite of the fundamental difference that exists between the spiritual and mental attitude of the author and his hero, we cannot but be struck by the many features of resemblance in the history of their two lives. A Breton of Morbihan and a Spaniard of the Asturias, they both are equally without a home. Lesage loses his parents, and Gil Blas is sent far away from his. Both serve their apprenticeship to life under the ferule of an uncle. Both are launched on the wide world without guide or compass to direct them, and almost without a penny. One makes his way to Salamanca, as the other does to Paris; one is robbed by brigands, the other by his guardians. Both fight their best against adverse fate, with different weapons it is true, and more often than not by help of dissimilar methods, for the temperament of the Breton excites him to active resistance, whereas the Spaniard is inclined by his to accommodate himself to circumstances. If we knew as much about Lesage's schools as we do about Gil Blas' caravans, I am certain that we should discover many more analogies than are generally brought to our notice. Not that I wish to suggest that the author aimed at writing anything more than a novel—Heaven forbid!—but I cannot help asserting that the work in many places has a certain autobiographical turn about it, that we frequently detect the author behind the hero, and that he continually makes the latter speak as if he were a second self—a second self, more malleable and less conscientious; a second self, an ideal figure of himself, as it were, reversed, but towards

whom he preserves a kindly and indulgent attitude, and to whom he confesses not without a touch of tenderness, through the mouth of the Duc de Lerma, "Indeed, my child, I am surprised that you have not been entirely corrupted by bad example. How many honest men are there, who would not have become downright rascals had they been put to similar proof?"

Notice, moreover, the personal form of the narrative, the frequent recurrence of the "I" in the narration of the principal adventure, as well as in that of the subordinate ones. And this obsession of the "I" which predominates throughout the work, is it not pre-eminently Celtic? I might say the same of the composition, or rather the lack of composition, which all critics of Gil Blas agree to underline. If it is a fault, all will agree at least that it is not a Latin one. The peculiar characteristic of the Latin genius is its delight in regular ordinances, in symmetrically planned and solidly constructed buildings. The Celt, on the contrary, the creature of sensitiveness and imagination rather than of reason, of feminine race, as Renan has said, is more willing to be led by the fairy of fancy than by the mentor of logic. Carelessly he passes along, lounging and idling, relating his stories for the mere pleasure of relating, introducing episodes one after the other as they occur to him, grafting tale on tale. And it is thus that Lesage works, and perhaps nothing more fully betrays how entirely he belonged to his own country. He just simply introduces Breton methods into a French novel. I can think of nothing better to compare with the loose construction of Gil Blas than one of the long winter evenings in Brittany, when those present, seated round the hearth, each in turn takes up the word, and with quick and ready tongue pours forth some gay or tragic tale, in which feeling and experience, fact and fancy, are mingled.

From time immemorial Brittany has been the classic land of the makers of tales. In the Middle Ages, fame throughout Europe centred round the "Bretons qui vont fablant." This gift of "fabler" Lesage, in my opinion, possessed to an unequalled degree; but I do not hesitate to affirm that he had his Breton origin to thank for being the most natural and the most fascinating of French story-tellers.

ANATOLE LE BRAZ

Rennes, December 12, 1909

THE following is a list of the published works of Le Sage (1668-1747).

First original work: *Crispin rival de son maître* (one act play), 1706; *Le Diable Boiteux*, 1707; *Turcaret* (drama in five acts), 1708; GIL BLAS, two vols, 1715; third vol. 1724; fourth vol. 1735; the chief English translation is that based on Smollett's, 1749, and still called after him, though freely revised and much improved by B. H. Malkin, whose text is followed in this edition; *Les Aventures de Guzman d'Alfarache* (an imitation of the Spanish), 1732; *Le Chevalier de Beauchesnes*, 1732; *Estevanille Gonzalez, surnommé le garçon de bonne humeur*, 1734; *Le Bachelier de Salamanque*, 1736; *Une Journée des Parques, Cheminées de Madrid*, and *La Valise Trouvée*, were followed by *Mélange Amusant de Saillies d'esprit et de traits historiques des plus frappants*, 1743.

Le Sage's earlier writings comprise translations and adaptations from the Spanish; among his later translations from the Italian was the *Orlando Innamorato*, of Boiardo.

Works: 12 vols 1821 (best edition), 1840; 1877; *Théâtre de la Foire*, 10 vols, 1737 (including all the plays).

Novels, with Memoirs, by Sir W. Scott, 1822.

Life: Sir W. Scott (see above); G. E. B. Saintsbury, notice prefixed to edition of GIL BLAS, 1881; L. Claretie, *Le Roman en France au début du XVIII Siècle; Le Sage, romancier*, etc., 1890; Eugène Lintilhac, 1893 (*Les Grands Écrivains Français*).

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GIL BLAS TO THE READER

READER! hark you, my friend! Do not begin the story of my life till I have told you a short tale.

Two students travelled together from Penafiel to Salamanca. Finding themselves tired and thirsty, they stopped by the side of a spring on the road. While they were resting there, after having quenched their thirst, by chance they espied on a stone near them, even with the ground, part of an inscription, in some degree effaced by time, and by the tread of flocks in the habit of watering at that spring. Having washed the stone, they were able to trace these words in the dialect of Castille; *Aqui està encerrada el alma del licenciado Pedro Garcias.* "Here lies interred the soul of the licentiate Peter Garcias."

Hey-day! roars out the younger, a lively, heedless fellow, who could not get on with his deciphering for laughter: This is a good joke indeed: "Here lies interred the soul."

. . . A soul interred! . . . I should like to know the whimsical author of this ludicrous epitaph. With this sneer he got up to go away. His companion, who had more sense, said within himself: Underneath this stone lies some mystery; I will stay, and see the end of it. Accordingly, he let his comrade depart, and without loss of time began digging round about the stone with his knife till he got it up. Under it he found a purse of leather, containing a hundred ducats with a card on which was written these words in Latin: "Whoever thou art who hast wit enough to discover the meaning of the inscription, I appoint thee my heir, in the hope thou wilt make a better use of my fortune than I have done!" The student, out of his wits at the discovery, replaced the stone in its former position and set out again on the Salamanca road with the soul of the licentiate in his pocket.

Now, my good friend and reader, no matter who you are, you must be like one or the other of these two students. If you cast your eye over my adventures without fixing it on the moral concealed under them, you will derive very little benefit from the perusal: but if you read with attention you will find that mixture of the useful with the agreeable, so successfully prescribed by Horace.

THE HISTORY OF GIL BLAS OF SANTILLANE

BOOK THE FIRST

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH AND EDUCATION OF GIL BLAS

My father, Blas of Santillane, after having borne arms for a long time in the Spanish service, retired to his native place. There he married a chamber-maid who was not exactly in her teens, and I made my début on this stage ten months after marriage. They afterwards went to live at Oviedo, where my mother got into service, and my father obtained a situation equally adapted to his capacities as a squire. As their wages were their fortune, I might have got my education as I could, had it not been for an uncle of mine in the town, a canon, by name Gil Perez. He was my mother's eldest brother, and my godfather. Figure to yourself a little fellow, three feet and a half high, as fat as you can conceive, with a head sunk deep between his shoulders, and you have my uncle to the life. For the rest of his qualities, he was an ecclesiastic, and of course thought of nothing but good living, I mean in the flesh as well as in the spirit, with the means of which good living his stall, no lean one, provided him.

He took me home to his own house from my infancy, and ran the risk of my bringing up. I struck him as so brisk a lad, that he resolved to cultivate my talents. He bought me a primer, and undertook my tuition as far as reading went: which was not amiss for himself as well as for me; since by teaching me my letters he brushed up his own learning, which had not been pursued in a very scholastic manner; and, by dint of application, he got at last to read his breviary out of hand, which he had never been able to do before. He would have been very glad to have taught me Latin, to save expense, but, alas! poor Gil Perez! he had

never skimmed the first principles of it in the whole course of his life. I should not wonder if he was the most ignorant member of the chapter, though on a subject involving as many possibilities as there were canons, I presume not to pledge myself for anything like certainty. To be sure, I have heard it suggested, that he did not gain his preferment altogether by his learning: but that he owed it exclusively to the gratitude of some good nuns whose discreet factor he had been, and who had credit enough to procure him the order of priesthood without the troublesome ceremony of an examination.

He was obliged therefore to place me under the correction of a master, so that I was sent to Doctor Godinez, who had the reputation of being the most accomplished pedant of Oviedo. I profited so well under his instructions, that by the end of five or six years I could read a Greek author or two, and had no very inadequate conception of the Latin poets. Besides my classical studies, I applied to logic, which enabled me to become an expert arguer. I now fell in love with discussions of all kinds to such an excess, that I stopped his Majesty's subjects on the high road, acquaintance or strangers, no matter! and proposed some knotty point of controversy. Sometimes I fell in with a clan of Irish, and an altercation never comes amiss to them! That was your time if you are fond of a battle. Such gestures! such grimaces! such contortions! Our eyes sparkling, and our mouths foaming! Those who did not take us for what we affected to be, philosophers, must have set us down for madmen.

But let that be as it will, I gained the reputation of no small learning in the town. My uncle was delighted, because he prudently considered that I should so much the sooner cease to be chargeable to him. Come here, Gil Blas, quoth he one day, you are got to be a fine fellow. You are past seventeen, and a clever lad; you must bestir yourself, and get forward in the world. I think of sending you to the university of Salamanca: with your wit you will easily get a good post. I will give you a few ducats for your journey, and my mule, which will fetch ten or twelve pistoles at Salamanca, and with such a sum at setting out, you will be enabled to hold up your head till you get a situation.

He could not have proposed to me anything more agreeable: for I was dying to see a little of life. At the same time, I was not such a fool as to betray my satisfaction; and when it came to the hour of parting, by the sensibility I discovered at taking leave of my dear uncle, to whom I was so much obliged, and by calling in the stage effect of grief, I so softened the good soul that he put his hand deeper into his pocket than he would have done, could he have pried into all that was passing in the interior of my hypocritical little heart. Before my departure I took a last leave of my papa and mamma, who loaded me with an ample inheritance of good advice. They enjoined me to pray to God for my uncle, to go honestly through the world, not to engage in any ill, and above all, not to lay my hands on other people's property. After they had lectured me for a good while, they made me a present of their blessing, which was all my patrimony and all my expectation. As soon as I had received it, I mounted my mule, and saw the outside of the town.

CHAPTER II

GIL BLAS' ALARM ON HIS ROAD TO PEGNAFLOR; HIS ADVENTURES ON HIS ARRIVAL IN THAT TOWN; AND THE CHARACTER OF THE MEN WITH WHOM HE SUPPED

HERE I am, then, on the other side of Oviedo, on the road to Pegnaflor, with the world before me, as yet my own master, as well as master of a bad mule and forty good ducats, without reckoning on a little supplementary cash purloined from my much-honoured uncle. The first thing I did was to let my mule go as the beast liked, that is to say, very lazily. I dropped the rein, and taking out my ducats, began to count them backwards and forwards in my hat. I was out of my wits for joy, never having seen such a sum of money before, and could not help looking at it and sifting it through my fingers. I had counted it over about the twentieth time, when all at once my mule, with head raised, and ears pricked up, stood stock still in the middle of the high road. I thought, to be sure, something was the matter; looked about for a cause, and perceiving a hat upon the ground, with a rosary of large beads, at the same time heard

a lugubrious voice pronounce these words: Pray, honoured master, have pity on a poor maimed soldier! Please to throw a few small pieces into this hat; you shall be rewarded for it in the other world. I looked immediately on the side whence the voice proceeded, and saw, just by a thicket, twenty or thirty paces from me, a sort of a soldier, who had mounted the barrel of a confounded long carbine on two cross sticks, and seemed to be taking aim at me. At a sight which made me tremble for the patrimony of the Church committed to my care, I stopped short, made sure of my ducats, and taking out a little small change, as I rode by the hat placed to receive the charity of those quiet subjects who had not the courage to refuse it, dropped in my contribution in detail, to convince the soldier how nobly I dealt by him. He was satisfied with my liberality, and gave me a blessing for every kick I gave my mule in my impatience to get out of his way; but the infernal beast, without partaking in the slightest degree of my impatience, went at the old steady pace. A long custom of jogging on fair and softly under my uncle's weight had obliterated every idea of that motion called a gallop.

The prospect of my journey was not much improved by this adventure as a specimen. I considered within myself that I had yet some distance to Salamanca, and might, not improbably, meet with something worse. My uncle seemed to have been very imprudent not to have consigned me to the care of a muleteer. That, to be sure, was what he ought to have done; but his notion was, that by giving me his mule, my journey would be cheaper; and that entered more into his calculation than the dangers in which I might be involved on the road. To retrieve his error, therefore, I resolved, if I had the good luck to arrive safe at Pegnaflor, to offer my mule for sale, and take the opportunity of a muleteer going to Astorga, whence I might get to Salamanca by a similar conveyance. Though I had never been out of Oviedo I was acquainted with the names of the towns through which I was to pass; a species of information I took care to procure before my setting out.

I got safe and sound to Pegnaflor, and stopped at the door of a very decent-looking inn. My foot was scarcely out of the stirrup before the landlord was at my side, overwhelming me with public-house civility. He untied my

cloak-bag with his own hands, swung it across his shoulders, and ushered my Honour into a room, while one of his men led my mule to the stable. This landlord, the most busy prattler of the Asturias, ready to bother you impertinently about his own concerns, and, at the same time, with a sufficient portion of curiosity to worm himself into the knowledge of yours, was not long in telling me that his name was Andrew Corcuelo; that he had seen some service as a sergeant in the army, which he had quitted fifteen months ago, and married a girl of Castropol, who, though a little tawny or so, knew how to make both ends meet as well as the best of them. He told me a thousand things besides which he might just as well have kept private. Thinking himself entitled, after this voluntary confidence, to an equal share of mine, he asked me in a breath, and without further preface, whence I came, whither I was going, and who I was. To all this I felt myself bound to answer, article by article, because, though rather abrupt in asking them, he accompanied each question with so apologetic a bow, beseeching me with so submissive a grimace not to be offended at his curiosity, that I was drawn in to gratify it whether I would or no. Thus by degrees did we get into a long conversation, in the course of which I took occasion to hint that I had some reasons for wishing to get rid of my mule, and travel under convoy of a muleteer. He seemed on the whole to approve of my plan, though he could not prevail with himself to tell me so briefly; for he introduced his remarks by descanting on all the possible and probable mischances to which travellers are liable on the road, not omitting an awkward story now and then. I thought the fellow would never have done. But the conclusion of the argument was, that if I wanted to sell my mule, he knew an honest jockey who would take it off my hands. I begged he would do me the favour to fetch him, which was no sooner said than done.

On his return he introduced the purchaser, with a high encomium on his integrity. We all three went into the yard, and the mule was brought out to show paces before the jockey, who set himself to examine the beast from head to foot. His report was bad enough. To be sure, it would not have been easy to make a good one; but if it had been the pope's mule, and this fellow was to cheapen the bar-

gain, it would have been just the same: nay, to speak with all due reverence, if he had been asked to give an opinion of the pope's great toe, from that disparaging habit of his, he would have pronounced it no better than the toe of any ordinary man. He laid it down, therefore, as a principle, that the mule had all the defects a mule could have: appealing to the landlord for a confirmation of his judgment, who, doubtless, had reasons of his own for not controverting his friend's assertion. Well! says the jockey, with an air of indifference, What price have you the conscience to ask for this devil of an animal? After such a panegyric, and master Corcuelo's certificate, whom I was fool enough to take for a fair-dealing man and a good judge of horse-flesh, they might have had the mule for nothing. I therefore told the dealer that I threw myself on his mercy: he must fix his own sum, and I should expect no more. On this he began to affect the gentleman, and answered that I had found out his weak side when I left it to his honour. He was right enough in that! his honour was his weak side! for instead of bidding up to my uncle's estimate of ten or twelve pistoles, the rascal had the impudence to offer three ducats, which I accepted with as light a heart as if I had got the best of the bargain.

Having disencumbered myself of my mule in so tradesmanlike a manner, I went with my landlord to a carrier who was to set out early the next morning for Astorga, and engaged to call me up in time. When we had settled the hire of the mule, as well as the expenses on the road, I turned back towards the inn with Corcuelo, who, as we went along, got into the private history of this muleteer. When I had been pestered with all the tittle-tattle of the town about this fellow, the changes were just beginning to ring on some new subject; but, by good luck, a pretty-looking sort of a man very civilly interrupted my loquacious friend. I left them together, and sauntered on without the slightest suspicion of being at all concerned in their discourse.

I ordered supper as soon as I got to the inn. It was a fish day: but I thought eggs were better suited to my finances. While they were getting ready I joined in conversation with the landlady, whom I had not seen before. She seemed a pretty piece of goods enough, and such a stir-

ring body, that I should have concluded, if her husband had not told me so, her tavern must have plenty of custom. The moment the omelet was served up I sat down to table by myself, and had scarcely got the relish of it, when my landlord walked in, followed by the man who had stopped him in the street. This pleasant gentleman wore a long rapier, and might, perhaps, be about thirty years of age. He came up to me in the most friendly manner possible. Mr Professor, says he, I have just now heard that you are the renowned Gil Blas of Santillane, that ornament of Oviedo and luminary of philosophy. And do my eyes behold that very greatest of all great scholars and wits, whose reputation has run hither so fast before him? Little do you think, continues he, directing his discourse to the landlord and landlady, little do you imagine, I say, what good luck has befallen you. Why, you have got hold of a treasure. In this young gentleman you behold the eighth wonder of the world. Then running up and throwing his arms about my neck, Excuse me, added he; but worlds would not bribe me to suppress the rapturous emotions your honoured presence has excited.

I could not answer him so glibly as I wished, not so much for want of words as of breath; for he hugged me so tight that I began to be alarmed for my windpipe. As soon, however, as I had got my head out of durance, I replied, Signor cavalier, I had not the least conception that my name was known at Pegnaflor. Known? resumed he in the same pompous style; we keep a register of all great persons within a circuit of twenty leagues round us. You have the character of a prodigy here; and I have not a shadow of doubt, but one day or other Spain will be as proud of numbering you among her rare productions, as Greece of having given birth to her seven wise men. This fine speech was followed as before; and I really began to think that with all my classical honours I should at last be doomed to share the fate of Antæus. If I had been master of ever so little experience, I should not have been the dupe of his rhodomontade. I must have discovered him by his outrageous compliments, to be one of those parasites who swarm in every town, and get into a stranger's company on his arrival, to appease the wolf in their stomachs at his expense; but my youth and vanity tempted me to draw a quite opposite

conclusion. My admirer was very clever in my eyes, and I asked him to supper on the strength of it. Oh! most willingly, cried he: with all my heart and soul. My fortunate star predominates, now that I have the honour of being in company with the illustrious Gil Blas of Santillane, and I shall certainly make the most of my good fortune as long as it lasts. My appetite is rather delicate, but I will just sit down with you by way of being sociable, and if I can swallow a bit! only just not to look sulky; for we philosophers are careless of the body.

These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than my panegyrist took his seat opposite to me. A cover was laid for him in due form and order. First he fell on the omelet with as much perseverance as if he had not tasted food for three whole days. By the complacency with which he eyed it I was morally certain the poor pancake was at death's door. I therefore ordered its heir-apparent to succeed; and the business was despatched with such speed, that the second made its appearance on the table, just as we; —no:—I beg pardon;—just as he had taken the last lick of its predecessor. He pressed forward the main business, however, with a diligence and activity proportioned to the importance of the object he had in view: so that he contrived to load me with panegyric on panegyric, without losing a single stroke in the progress of mastication. Now all this gave me no slender conceit of my pretty little self. When a man eats, he must drink. The first toast of course was my health. The second, in common civility, was my father and mother, whose happiness in having such an angel of a son, he could not sufficiently envy or admire. All this while he kept filling my glass, and challenging me to keep pace with him. It was impossible to be backward in doing justice to such excellent toasts and sentiments: the compliments with which they were seasoned did not come amiss; so that I got into such a convivial mood, at observing our second omelet to disappear not insensibly, as just to ask the landlord if he could not find us a little bit of fish. Master Corcuelo, who to all appearance played booty with the parasite, told me he had an excellent trout; but those who eat him must pay for him. I am afraid he is meat for your masters. Meat for our masters! exclaims my very humble servant in an angry tone of voice: that is more than

you know, my friend. Are you yet to learn that the best of your larder is not too good for the renowned Gil Blas of Santillane? Go where he will, he is fit to table with princes.

I was very glad that he took up the landlord's last expression; because if he had not, I should. I felt myself a little hurt at it, and said to Corcuelo with some degree of hauteur: Produce this trout of yours, and I will take the consequences. The landlord, who had got just what he wanted, set himself to work, and served it up in high order. At the first glance of this third course I saw such pleasure sparkling in the parasite's eyes, as proved him to be of a very complying temper; just as ready to do a kindness by the fish, as by those said eggs of which he had given so good an account. But at last he was obliged to lay down his arms for fear of accidents; as his magazine was crammed to the very throat. Having eat and drank his fill, he bethought him of putting a finishing hand to the farce. Master Gil Blas, said he, as he rose from the table, I am too well pleased with my princely entertainment to leave you without a word of advice, of which you seem to stand in much need. From this time forward be on your guard against extravagant praise. Do not trust men till you know them. You may meet with many another man, who, like me, may amuse himself at your expense, and perhaps carry the joke a little further. But do not you be taken in a second time, to believe yourself, on the word of such fellows, the eighth wonder of the world. With this sting in the tail of his farewell speech he very coolly took his leave.

I was as much alive to so ridiculous a circumstance, as I have ever been in after-life to the most severe mortifications. I did not know how to reconcile myself to the idea of having been so egregiously taken in, or, in fact, to lowering of my pride. So, so! quoth I, this rascal has been putting his tricks upon travellers, has he? Then he only wanted to pump my landlord! or more likely they were both in a story. Ah! my poor Gil Blas, thou hadst better hide thy silly head! To have suffered such knaves as these to turn thee into ridicule! A pretty story they will make of this! It is sure to travel back to Oviedo; and will give our friends a hopeful prospect of thy success in life. The family will be quite delighted to think what a blessed harvest all

their pious advice has produced. There was no occasion to preach up morals to thee; for verily thou hast more of the dupe than the sharper in thy composition. Ready to tear my eyes out or bite my fingers off from spite and vexation, I locked myself up in my chamber and went to bed, but not to sleep; of which I had not got a wink when the muleteer came to tell me, that he only waited for me to set out on his journey. I got up as expeditiously as I could; and while I was dressing Corcuelo put in his appearance, with a little bill in his hand;—a slight memorandum of the trout!—But paying through the nose was not the worst of it; for I had the vexation to perceive, that while I was counting over the cost, this hang-dog was chuckling at the recollection of the night before. Having been fleeced most shamefully for a supper, which stuck in my stomach though I had scarcely come in for a morsel of it, I joined the muleteer with my baggage, giving to as many devils as there are saints in the calendar, the parasite, the landlord, and the inn.

CHAPTER III

THE MULETEER'S TEMPTATION ON THE ROAD; ITS CONSEQUENCES, AND THE SITUATION OF GIL BLAS BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

I was not the only passenger. There were two young gentlemen of Pegnaflor; a little chorister of Mondognedo, who was travelling about the country, and a young tradesman of Astorga, returning home from Verco with his new-married wife. We soon got acquainted, and exchanged the usual confidence of travellers, telling one another whence we came and whither we were going. The bride was young enough; but so dark-complexioned, with so little of what a man likes to look at in a woman, that I did not think her worth the trouble. But she had youth and a good crummy person on her side, and the muleteer, being rather less nice in his taste, was resolved to try if he could not get into her good graces. This pretty project occupied his ingenuity during the whole day; but he deferred the execution till we should get to Cacabelos, the last place where we were to stop on the road. We alighted at an inn in the outskirts of

the town, a quiet convenient place, with a landlord who never troubled himself about other people's concerns. We were ushered into a private room, and got our supper snugly: but just as the cloth was taken away in comes our carrier in a furious passion:—Death and the devil! I have been robbed. Here had I a hundred pistoles in my purse! But I will have them back again. I am going for a magistrate;—and those gentry will not take a joke upon such serious subjects. You will all be put to the rack, unless you confess, and give back the money. The fellow played his part very naturally, and burst out of the room, leaving us in a terrible fright.

We had none of us the least suspicion of the trick, and being all strangers, were afraid of one another. I looked askance at the little chorister, and he, perhaps, had no better opinion of me. Besides, we were all a pack of greenhorns, and were quite unacquainted with the routine of business on these occasions. We were fools enough to believe that the torture would be the very first stage of our examination. With this dread upon our spirits, we all made for the door. Some effected their escape into the street, others into the garden: but the whole party preferred the discretion of running away to the valour of standing their ground. The young tradesman of Astorga had as great an objection to bone-twisting as the rest of us: so he did as Eneas, and many another good husband has done before him;—ran away and left his wife behind. At that critical moment the muleteer, as I was told afterwards, who had not half so much sense of decency as his own mules, delighted at the success of his stratagem, began moving his motives to the citizen's wife: but this Lucrece of the Asturias, borrowing the chastity of a saint from the ugliness of the devil who tempted her, defended her sweet person tooth and nail; and showed she was in earnest about it by the noise she made. The patrol, who happened to be passing by the inn at the time, and knew that the neighbourhood required a little looking after, took the liberty of just asking the cause of the disturbance. The landlord, who was trying if he could not sing in the kitchen louder than she could scream in the parlour, and swore he heard no music but his own, was at last obliged to introduce the myrmidons of the police to the distressed lady, just in time to rescue her

from the necessity of a surrender at discretion. The head officer, a coarse fellow, without an atom of feeling for the tender passion, no sooner saw the game that was playing than he gave the amorous muleteer five or six blows with the butt end of his halberd, representing to him the indecency of his conduct in terms quite as offensive to modesty as the naughty propensity which had called forth his virtuous indignation. Neither did he stop here; but laid hold of the culprit, and carried plaintiff and defendant before the magistrate. The former, with her charms all heightened by the discomposure of her dress, went eagerly to try their effect in obtaining justice for the outrage they had sustained. His Worship heard at least one party; and after solemn deliberation pronounced the offence to be of a most heinous nature. He ordered him to be stripped, and to receive a competent number of lashes in his presence. The conclusion of the sentence was, that if the Endymion of our Asturian Diana was not forthcoming the next day, a couple of guards should escort the disconsolate goddess to the town of Astorga, at the expense of this mule-driving Acteon.

For my part, being probably more terrified than the rest of the party, I got into the fields, scampering over hedge and ditch, through enclosures and across commons, till I found myself hard by a forest. I was just going for concealment to ensconce myself in the very heart of the thicket, when two men on horseback rode across me, crying, Who goes there? As my alarm prevented me from giving them an immediate answer, they came to close quarters, and holding each of them a pistol to my throat, required me to give an account of myself; who I was, whence I came, what business I had in that forest, and above all, not to tell a lie about it. Their rough interrogatives were, according to my notion, little better than the rack with which our friend the muleteer had offered to treat us. I represented myself however as a young man on my way from Oviedo to Salamanca; told the story of our late fright, and faithfully attributed my running away in such a hurry to the dread of a worse exercise under the torture. They burst into an immoderate fit of laughter at my simplicity; and one of them said: Take heart, my little friend; come along with us, and do not be afraid; we will put you in a place

where the devil shall not find you. At these words, he took me up behind him, and we darted into the forest.

I did not know what to think of this odd meeting; yet on the whole I could not well be worse off than before. If these gentry, thought I to myself, had been thieves, they would have robbed, and perhaps murdered me. Depend on it, they are a couple of good honest country gentlemen in this neighbourhood, who, seeing me frightened, have taken compassion on me, and mean to carry me home with them and make me comfortable. But these visions did not last long. After turning and winding backward and forward in deep silence, we found ourselves at the foot of a hill, where we dismounted. This is our abode, said one of these sequestered gentlemen. I looked about in all directions, but the deuce a bit of either house or cottage: not a vestige of human habitation! The two men in the meantime raised a great wooden trap, covered with earth and briars, to conceal the entrance of a long shelving passage under-ground, to which from habits the poor beasts took very kindly of their own accord. Their masters kept tight hold of me and let the trap down after them. Thus was the worthy nephew of my uncle Perez caught, just for all the world as you would catch a rat.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBTERRANEOUS DWELLING AND ITS CONTENTS

I NOW knew into what company I had fallen; and I leave it to anyone to judge whether the discovery must not have rid me of my former fear. A dread more mighty and more just now seized my faculties. Money and life, all given up for lost! With the air of a victim on his passage to the altar did I walk, more dead than alive, between my two conductors, who finding that I trembled, frightened me so much the more by telling me not to be afraid. When we had gone two hundred paces, winding down a declivity all the way, we got into a stable lighted by two large iron lamps suspended from the vault above. There was a good store of straw, and several casks of hay and corn with room

enough for twenty horses: but at that time there were only the two which came with us. An old negro, who seemed for his years in pretty good case, was tying them to the rack where they were to feed.

We went out of the stable. By the melancholy light of some other lamps which only served to dress up horror in its native colours, we arrived at a kitchen where an old harridan was broiling some steaks on the coals, and getting supper ready. The kitchen furniture was better than might be expected, and the pantry provided in a very plentiful manner. The lady of the larder's picture is worth drawing. Considerably on the wrong side of sixty!—In her youth her hair had been of a fiery red; though she would have called it auburn. Time had indeed given it the fairer tint of grey; but a lock of more youthful hue, interspersed at intervals, produced all the variegated effect of the admired autumnal shades. To say nothing of an olive complexion, she had an enormous chin turning up, an immense nose turning down, with a mouth in the middle, modestly retiring inwards, to make room for its encroaching neighbours. Red eyes are no beauty in any animal but a ferret;—hers were purple.

Here, dame Leonarda, said one of the horsemen as he presented me to this angelic imp of darkness, we have brought you a young lad. Then looking round, and observing me to be miserably pale, Pluck up your spirits, my friend; you shall come to no harm. We want a scullion, and have met with you. You are a lucky dog! We had a boy who died about a fortnight ago: you shall succeed to the preferment. He was rather too delicate for his place. You seem a good stout fellow, and may live a week or two longer. We find you in bed and board, coal and candle; but as for day-light, you will never see that again. Your leisure hours will pass off very agreeably with Leonarda, who is really a very good creature, and tolerably tender-hearted; you will have all your little comforts about you. I flatter myself you have not got among beggars. At this moment the thief seized a flambeau; and as I feared, "with zeal to destroy;" for he ordered me to follow him.

He took me into a cellar where I saw a great number of bottles and earthen pots full of excellent wine. He then made me cross several rooms. In some were pieces of

cloth piled up; in others, stuffs and silks. As we passed through I could not help casting a sheep's eye at the gold and silver plate peeping out of the different cupboards. After that, I followed him into a great hall illuminated by three copper lustres, and serving as a gallery between the other rooms. Here he put fresh questions to me; asking my name;—why I left Oviedo;—and when I had satisfied his curiosity: Well, Gil Blas, said he, since your only motive for quitting your native place was to get into something snug and eligible, to be sure you must have been born to good luck, or you would not have fallen into our hands. I tell you once for all, you will live here on the fat of the land, and may souse over head and ears in ready money. Besides, you are in a place of perfect safety. The officers of the holy brotherhood might pass through the forest a hundred times without discovering our subterraneous abode. The entrance is only known to myself and my comrades. You may perhaps ask how it came to be contrived, without being perceived by the inhabitants in the neighbourhood. But you are to understand, my friend, that it was made long ago, and is no work of ours. After the Moors had made themselves masters of Granada, of Arragon, and nearly the whole of Spain, the Christians, rather than submit to the tyranny of infidels, betook themselves to flight, and lay concealed in this country, in Biscay, and in the Asturias, whither the brave Don Pelagio had withdrawn himself. They lived in a state of exile, on the mountains, or in the woods, dispersed in little knots. Some took up their residences in natural caves, others in artificial dwellings under-ground, like this we are in. In process of time, when by the blessing of Providence they had driven their enemies out of Spain, they returned to the towns. From that time forth their retreats have served as a rendezvous for the gentlemen of our profession. It is true that several of them have been discovered and destroyed by the holy brotherhood: but there are some yet remaining; and, by great good luck, I have tenanted this without paying any rent for it almost these fifteen years: Captain Rolando, at your service! I am the leader of the band; and the man you saw with me is one of my troopers.

CHAPTER V

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BANDITTI IN THE SUBTERRANEOUS RETREAT, WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR PLEASANT CONVERSATION

JUST as Captain Rolando had finished his speech six new faces made their appearance in the hall; the lieutenant and five privates returning home with their booty. They were hauling in two great baskets full of sugar, cinnamon, pepper, figs, almonds, and raisins. The lieutenant gave an account of their proceedings to the captain, and told him they had taken these articles, as well as the sumpter-mule, from a grocer of Benavento. An official report having thus been made to the prime-minister, the grocer's contribution was carried to account; and the next step was to regale after their labours. A large table was set out in the hall. They sent me back to the kitchen, where dame Leonarda told me what I had to do. I made the best of a bad bargain, finding the luck ran against me; and, swallowing my grievances, set myself to wait on my noble masters.

I cleaned my plate, set out my sideboard, and brought up my wine. As soon as I announced dinner to be on table, consisting of two good black peppery ragouts for the first course, this high and mighty company took their seats. They fell to most voraciously. My place was to wait; and I handed about the glasses with so butler-like an air, as to be not a little complimented on my dexterity. The chief entertained them with a short sketch of my story, and praised my parts. But I had recovered from my mania by this time, and could listen to my own panegyric with the humility of an anchorite or the contempt of a philosopher. They all seemed to take a liking to me, and to think I had dropped from the clouds on purpose to be their cup-bearer. My predecessor was a fool to me. Since his death, the illustrious Leonarda had the honour of presenting nectar to these gods of the lower regions. But she was now degraded, and I had the felicity of being installed in her office. Thus, old Hebe being a little the worse for wear, young Ganymede tripped up her heels.

A substantial joint of meat after the ragouts at length blunted the edge of their appetites. Eating and drinking went together: so that they soon got into a merry pin, and made a roaring noise. Well done, my lads! All talkers and no listeners. One begins a long story, another cuts a joke; here a fellow bawls, there a fellow sings; and they all seem to be at cross purposes. At last Rolando, tired of a concert in which he could hardly hear the sound of his own voice, let them know that he was maestro di capella, and brought them into better tune. Gentlemen, said he, I have a question to put. Instead of stunning one another with this infernal din, had we not better enjoy a little rational conversation? A thought is just come into my head. Since the happy day that united us we have never had the curiosity to inquire into each other's pedigrees, or by what chain of circumstances we were each of us led to embrace our present way of life. There would be no harm in knowing who and who are together. Let us exchange confidence: we may find some amusement in it. The lieutenant and the rest, like true heroes of romance, accepted the challenge with the utmost courtesy, and the captain told the first story to the following effect:—

Gentlemen, you are to know that I am the only son of a rich citizen in Madrid. The day of my birth was celebrated in the family by rejoicings without end. My father, no chicken, thought it a considerable feat to have got an heir, and my mother was kind enough to suckle me herself. My maternal grandfather was still living: a good old man, who did not trouble himself about other people's concerns, but said his prayers, and fought his campaigns over and over again; for he had been in the army. Of course I was idolized by these three persons; never out of their arms. My early years were passed in the most childish amusements, for fear of hurting my health by application. It will not do, said my father, to hammer much learning into children till time has ripened their understanding. While he waited for this ripening, the season went by. I could neither read nor write: but I made up for that in other ways. My father taught me a thousand different games. I became perfectly acquainted with cards, was no stranger to dice, and my grandfather set me the example of drawing the long bow, while he entertained me with his military exploits. He

sung the same songs repeatedly one after another every day; so that when, after saying ten or twelve lines after him for three months together, I got to boggle through them without missing, the whole family were in raptures at my memory. Neither was my wit thought to be at all less extraordinary; for I was suffered to talk at random, and took care to put in my oar in the most impertinent manner possible. O the pretty little dear! exclaimed my father, as if he had been fascinated. My mother made it up with kisses, and my grandfather's old eyes overflowed. I played all sorts of dirty and indecent tricks before them with impunity; everything was excusable in so fine a boy: an angel could not do wrong. Going on in this manner, I was already in my twelfth year without ever having a master. It was high time; but then he was to teach me by fair means: he might threaten, but must not flog me. This arrangement did me but little good; for sometimes I laughed when my tutor scolded: at others, I ran with tears in my eyes to my mother or my grandfather, and complained that he had used me ill. The poor devil got nothing by denying it. My word was always taken before his, and he came off with the character of a cruel rascal. One day I scratched myself with my own nails, and set up a howl as if I had been flogged. My mother ran, and turned the master out of doors, though he vowed and protested he had never lifted a finger against me.

Thus did I get rid of all my tutors, till at last I met with one to my mind. He was a bachelor of Alcala. This was the master for a young man of fashion. Women, wine, and gaming, were his principal amusements. It was impossible to be in better hands. He hit the right nail on the head: for he let me do what I pleased, and thus got into the good graces of the family, who abandoned me to his conduct. They had no reason to repent. He perfected me betimes in the knowledge of the world. By dint of taking me about to all his haunts, he gave such a finish to my education, that barring literature and science, I became an universal scholar. As soon as he saw that I could go alone in the high road to ruin he went to qualify others for the same journey.

During my childhood I had lived at home just as I liked, and did not sufficiently consider, that now I was beginning to be responsible for my own actions. My father and

mother were a standing jest. Yet they were themselves thrown into convulsions at my sallies; and the more ridiculous they were made by them, the more waggish they thought me. In the mean time I got into all manner of scrapes with some young fellows of my own kidney; and, as our relations kept us rather too short of cash for the exigencies of so loose a life, we each of us made free with whatever we could lay our hands on in our own families. Finding this would not raise the supplies, we began to pick pockets in the streets at night. As ill luck would have it, our exploits came to the knowledge of the police. A warrant was out against us; but some good-natured friend, thinking it a pity we should be nipped in the bud, gave us a caution. We took to our heels, and rose in our vocation to the rank of highwaymen. From that time forth, gentlemen, with a blessing on my endeavours, I have gone on till I am almost the father of the profession, in spite of the dangers to which it is exposed.

Here the captain ended, and it came to the turn of the lieutenant. Gentlemen, extremes are said to meet;—and so it will appear from a comparison of our commander's education and mine. My father was a butcher at Toledo. He passed, with reason, for the greatest brute in the town, and my mother's sweet disposition was not mended by the example. In my childhood, they whipped me in emulation of one another; I came in for a thousand lashes of a day! The slightest fault was followed up by the severest punishment. In vain did I beg for mercy with tears in my eyes, and protest that I was sorry for what I had done. They never excused me, and nine times out of ten flogged me for nothing. When I was under my father's lash, my mother, not thinking his arm stout enough, lent her assistance, instead of begging me off. The favours I received at their hands gave me such a disgust, that I quitted their house before I had completed my fourteenth year, took the Arragon road, and begged my way to Saragossa. There I associated with vagrants, who led a merry life enough. They taught me to counterfeit blindness and lameness, to dress up an artificial wound in each of my legs, and to adopt many other methods of imposing on the credulity of the charitable and humane. In the morning, like actors at rehearsal, we cast our characters, and settled the business of the comedy.

We had each our exits and our entrances; till in the evening the curtain dropped, and we regaled at the expense of the dupes we had deluded in the day. Wearied, however, with the company of these wretches, and wishing to live in more worshipful society, I entered into partnership with a gang of sharpers. These fellows taught me some good tricks: but Saragossa soon became too hot to hold us, after we had fallen out with a limb of the law, who had hitherto taken us under his protection. We each of us provided for ourselves, and left the devil to take the hindmost. For my part, I enlisted in a brave and veteran regiment, which had seen abundance of service on the king's highway: and I found myself so comfortable in their quarters, that I had no desire to change my berth. So that you see, gentlemen, I was very much obliged to my relations for their bad behaviour; for if they had treated me a little more kindly, I might have been a blackguard butcher at this moment, instead of having the honour to be your lieutenant.

Gentlemen,—interrupted a hopeful young freebooter who sat between the captain and the lieutenant,—the stories we have just heard are neither so complicated nor so curious as mine. I peeped into existence by means of a countrywoman in the neighbourhood of Seville. Three weeks after she had set me down in this system, a nurse child was offered her. You are to understand she was yet in her prime, comely in her person, and had a good breast of milk. The young suckling had noble blood in him, and was an only son. My mother accepted the proposal with all her heart, and went to fetch the child. It was entrusted to her care. She had no sooner brought it home, than, fancying a resemblance, she conceived the idea of substituting me for the brat of high birth, in the hope of drawing a handsome commission at some future time for this motherly office in behalf of her infant. My father, whose morals were on a level with those of clodhoppers in general, lent himself very willingly to the cheat: so that with only a change of clouts the son of Don Rodrigo de Herrera was packed off in my name to another nurse, and my mother suckled her own and her master's child at once in my little person.

They may say what they will of instinct and the force of blood! The little gentleman's parents were very easily

taken in. They had not the slightest suspicion of the trick; and were eternally dandling me till I was seven years old. As it was their intention to make me a finished gentleman, they gave me masters of all kinds; but I had very little taste for their lessons, and above all, I detested the sciences. I had at any time rather play with the servants or the stable boys, and was a complete kitchen genius. But tossing up for heads or tails was not my ruling passion. Before seventeen I had an itch for getting drunk. I played the devil among the chamber-maids; but my prime favourite was a kitchen girl, who had infinite merit in my eyes. She was a great bloated horse-god-mother, whose good case and easy morals suited me exactly. I boarded her with so little circumspection that Don Rodrigo took notice of it. He took me to task pretty sharply; twitted me with my low taste; and, for fear the presence of my charmer should counteract his sage counsels, showed the goddess of my devotions the outside of the door.

This proceeding was rather offensive; and I determined to be even with him. I stole his wife's jewels; and ravishing my Helen from a laundress of her acquaintance, went off with her in open day, that the transaction might lose nothing in point of notoriety. But this was not all. I carried her among her relations, where I married her according to the rites of the church, as much from the personal motive of mortifying Herrera, as from the patriotic enthusiasm of encouraging our young nobility to mend the breed. Three months after marriage, I heard that Don Rodrigo had gone the way of all flesh. The intelligence was not lost upon me. I was at Seville in a twinkling, to administer in due form and order to his effects; but the tables were turned. My mother had paid the debt of nature, and in her last agonies had been so much off her guard as to confess the whole affair to the curate of the village and other competent witnesses. Don Rodrigo's son had already taken my place, or rather his own, and his popularity was increased by the deficiency of mine; so that as the trumps were all out in that hand, and I had no particular wish for the present my wife was likely to make me, I joined issue with some desperate blades, with whom I began my trading ventures.

The young cut-purse having finished his story, another

told us that he was the son of a merchant at Burgos; that, in his youth, prompted more by piety than wit, he had taken the religious habit and professed in a very strict order, and that a few years afterwards he had apostatized. In short, the eight robbers told their tale one after another, and when I had heard them all, I did not wonder that the destinies had brought them together. The conversation now took a different turn. They brought several schemes upon the carpet for the next campaign; and after having laid down their plan of operations, rose from table and went to bed. They lighted their night candles, and withdrew to their apartments. I attended Captain Rolando to his. While I was fiddling about him as he undressed: Well! Gil Blas, said he, you see how we live! We are always merry; hatred and envy have no footing here; we have not the least difference, but hang together just like monks. You are sure, my good lad, to lead a pleasant life here; for I do not think you are fool enough to make any bones about consorting with gentlemen of the road. In what does ours differ from many a more reputable trade? Depend on it, my friend, all men love two hands in their neighbour's purse, though only one in their own. Men's principles are all alike; the only difference lies in the mode of carrying them into effect. Conquerors, for instance, make free with the territories of their neighbours. People of fashion borrow and do not pay. Bankers, treasurers, brokers, clerks, and traders of all kinds, wholesale and retail, give ample liberty to their wants to overdraw on their consciences. I shall not mention the hangers-on of the law; we all know how it goes with them. At the same time it must be allowed that they have more humanity than we have; for as it is often our vocation to take away the life of the innocent for plunder, it is sometimes theirs for fee and reward to save the guilty.

CHAPTER VI

THE ATTEMPT OF GIL BLAS TO ESCAPE, AND ITS SUCCESS

After the captain of the banditti had thus apologized for adopting such a line of life, he went to bed. For my part, I returned to the hall, where I cleared the table, and set everything to rights. Then I went to the kitchen, where Domingo, the old negro, and dame Leonarda had been expecting me at supper. Though entirely without appetite, I had the good manners to sit down with them. Not a morsel could I eat; and, as I scarcely felt more miserable than I looked, this pair so justly formed to meet by nature, undertook to give me a little comfort. Why do you take on so, my good lad? said the old dowager: you ought rather to bless your stars for your good luck. You are young, and seem a little soft; you would have a fine kettle of fish of it in the busy world. You might have fallen into bad hands, and then your morals would have been corrupted; whereas here your innocence is insured to its full value. Dame Leonarda is in the right, put in the old negro gravely, the world is but a troublesome place. Be thankful, my friend, for being so early relieved from the dangers, the difficulties, and the afflictions of this miserable life.

I bore this prosing very quietly, because I should have got no good by putting myself in a passion about it. At length Domingo, after playing a good knife and fork, and getting gloriously muddled, took himself off to the stable. Leonarda, by the glimmering of a lamp, showed me the way to a vault which served as a last home to those of the corps who died a natural death. Here I stumbled upon something more like a grave than a bed. This is your room, said she. Your predecessor lay here as long as he was among us, and here he lies to this day. He suffered himself to be hurried out of life in his prime: do not you be so foolish as to follow his example. With this kind advice, she left me with the lamp for my companion and returned to the kitchen. I threw myself on the little bed, not so much for rest as meditation. O heaven! exclaimed I, was there ever a fate so dreadful as mine? It is determined then I am to take

my leave of daylight! Beside this, as if it were not enough to be buried alive at eighteen, my misery is to be aggravated by being in the service of a banditti; by passing the day with highwaymen, and the night in a charnel-house. These reflections, which seemed to me very dismal, and were indeed no better than they seemed, set me crying most bitterly. I could not conceive what cursed maggot my uncle had got in his head to send me to Salamanca; repented running away from Cacabelos, and would have compounded for the torture. But, considering how vain it was to shut the door when the steed was stolen, I determined, instead of lamenting the past, to hit upon some expedient for making my escape. What! thought I, is it impossible to get off? The cut-throats are asleep; cooky and the black will be snoring ere long. Why cannot I, by the help of this lamp, find the passage by which I descended into these infernal regions? I am afraid, indeed, my strength is not equal to lifting the trap at the entrance. However, let us see. Faint heart never won fair lady. Despair will lend me new force, and who knows but I may succeed?

Thus was the train laid for a grand attempt. I got up as soon as Leonarda and Domingo were likely to be asleep. With the lamp in my hand, I stole out of the vault, putting up my prayers to all the spirits in paradise, and ten miles round. It was with no small difficulty that I threaded all the windings of this new labyrinth. At length I found myself at the stable door, and perceived the passage which was the object of my search. Pushing on I made my way towards the trap with a light pair of heels and a beating heart: but, alas! in the middle of my career I ran against a cursed iron grate locked fast, with bars so close as not to admit a hand between them. I looked rather foolish at the occurrence of this new difficulty, which I had not been aware of at my entrance, because the grate was then open. However, I tried what I could do by fumbling at the bars. Then for a peep at the lock; or whether it could not be forced! When all at once my poor shoulders were saluted with five or six good strokes of a bull's pizzle. I set up such a shrill alarum, that the den of Cacus rang with it; when looking round, who should it be but the old negro in his shirt, holding a dark lanthorn in one hand, and the instrument of my punishment in the other. Oh, oh! quoth he, my merry little

fellow, you will run away, will you? No, no! you must not think to set your wits against mine. I heard you all the while. You thought you should find the grate open, did not you? You may take it for granted, my friend, that henceforth it will always be shut. When we keep any one here against his will, he must be a cleverer fellow than you to make his escape.

In the meantime, at the howl I had set up two or three of the robbers waked suddenly; and not knowing but the holy brotherhood might be falling upon them, they got up and called their comrades. Without the loss of a moment all were on the alert. Swords and carabines were put in requisition, and the whole posse advanced forward almost in a state of nature to the place where I was parleying with Domingo. But as soon as they learned the cause of the uproar, their alarm resolved itself into a peal of laughter. How now, Gil Blas, said the apostate son of the church, you have not been a good six hours with us, and are you tired of our company already? You must have a great objection to retirement. Why, what would you do if you were a Carthusian friar? Get along with you, and go to bed. This time you shall get off with Domingo's discipline; but if you are ever caught in a second attempt of the same kind, by Saint Bartholomew! we will flay you alive. With this hint he retired, and the rest of the party went back to their rooms. The old negro, taking credit to himself for his vigilance, returned to his stable; and I found my way back to my charnel-house, where I passed the remainder of the night in weeping and wailing.

CHAPTER VII

GIL BLAS, NOT BEING ABLE TO DO WHAT HE LIKES, DOES WHAT HE CAN.

For the first few days I thought I should have given up the ghost for very spite and vexation. The lingering life I led was nearly akin to death itself; but in the end my good genius whispered me to play the hypocrite. I aimed at looking a little more cheerful; began to laugh and sing, though it was sometimes on the wrong side of my mouth;

in a word, I put so good a face on the matter, that Leonarda and Domingo were completely taken in. They thought the bird was reconciled to his cage. The robbers entertained the same notion. I looked as brisk as the beverage I poured out, and put in my oar whenever I thought I could say a good thing. My freedom, far from offending, was taken in good part. Gil Blas, quoth the captain one evening, while I was playing the buffoon, you have done well, my friend, to banish melancholy. I am delighted with your wit and humour. Some people wear a mask at first acquaintance; I had no notion what a jovial fellow you were.

My praises now seemed to run from mouth to mouth. They were all so partial to me, that, not to miss my opportunity;—Gentlemen, quoth I, allow me to tell you a piece of my mind. Since I have been your guest, a new light breaks in upon me. I have bid adieu to vulgar prejudices, and caught a ray at the fountain of your illumination. I feel that I was born to be your knight companion. I languish to make one among you, and will stand my chance of a halter with the best. All the company cried Hear!—I was considered as a promising member of the senate. It was then determined unanimously to give me a trial in some inferior department; afterwards to bespeak me a good desperate encounter in which I might show my prowess; and if I answered expectation to give me a high and responsible employment in the commonwealth.

It was necessary therefore to go on exhibiting a copy of my countenance, and doing my best in my office of cupbearer. I was impatient beyond measure; for I only aspired after the honours of the sitting, to obtain the liberty of going abroad with the rest; and I was in hopes that by running the risk of getting my neck into one noose I might get it out of another. This was my only chance. The time, nevertheless, seemed long to wait, and I kept my eye on Domingo, with the hope of outwitting him: but the thing was not feasible; he was always on the watch. Orpheus as leader of the band, with a complete orchestra of performers as good as himself, could not have soothed the savage breast of this Cerberus. The truth is, by the by, that for fear of exciting his suspicion, I did not set my wits against him so much as I might have done. He was on the look-out, and

I was obliged to play the prude, or my virtue might have come into disgrace. I therefore stopped proceedings till the time of my probation should expire, to which I looked forward with impatience, just as if I was waiting for a place under government.

Heaven be praised, in about six months I gained my end. The commandant Rolando addressing his regiment, said: Comrades, we must stand upon honour with Gil Blas. I have no bad opinion of our young candidate; we shall make something of him. If you will take my advice, let him go and reap his first harvest with us to-morrow on the king's highway. We will lead him on in the path of honour. The robbers applauded the sentiments of the captain with a thunder of acclamation; and to show me how much I was considered as one of the gang, from that moment they dispensed with my attendance at the sideboard. Dame Leonarda was reinstated in the office from which she had been discharged to make room for me. They made me change my dress, which consisted in a plain short cossack a good deal the worse for wear, and tricked me out in the spoils of a gentleman lately robbed. After this inauguration, I made my arrangements for my first campaign.

CHAPTER VIII

GIL BLAS GOES OUT WITH THE GANG, AND PERFORMS AN EXPLOIT ON THE HIGHWAY.

It was past midnight in the month of September, when I issued from the subterraneous abode as one of the fraternity. I was armed, like them, with a carabine, two pistols, a sword, and a bayonet, and was mounted on a very good horse, the property of the gentleman in whose costume I appeared. I had lived so long like a mole underground, that the daybreak could not fail of dazzling me: but my eyes got reconciled to it by degrees.

We passed close by Pontferrada, and were determined to lie in ambush behind a small wood skirting the road to Leon. There we were waiting for whatever fortune might please to throw in our way, when we espied a Dominican friar, mounted, contrary to the rubric of those pious fathers, on a

shabby mule. God be praised, exclaimed the captain with a sneer, this is a noble beginning for Gil Blas. Let him go and trounce that monk: we will bear witness to his qualifications. The connoisseurs were all of opinion that this commission suited my talents to a hair, and exhorted me to do my best. Gentlemen, quoth I, you shall have no reason to complain. I will strip this holy father to his birthday suit, and give you complete right and title to his mule. No, no, said Rolando, the beast would not be worth its fodder: only bring us our reverend pastor's purse; that is all we require. Hereupon I issued from the wood and pushed up to the man of God, doing penance all the time in my own breast for the sin I was committing. I could have liked to have turned my back upon my fellows at that moment; but most of them had the advantage of better horses than mine: had they seen me making off, they would have been at my heels, and would soon have caught me, or perhaps would have fired a volley, for which I was not sufficiently case-hardened. I could not therefore venture on so perilous an alternative; so that claiming acquaintance with the reverend father, I asked to look at his purse, and just put out the end of a pistol. He stopped short to gaze upon me, and, without seeming much frightened, said, My child, you are very young; this is an early apprenticeship to a bad trade. Father, replied I, bad as it is, I wish I had begun it sooner. What! my son, rejoined the good friar, who did not understand the real meaning of what I said, how say you? What blindness! give me leave to place before your eyes the unhappy condition. Come, come, father! interrupted I, with impatience, a truce to your morality, if you please. My business on the high road is not to hear sermons. Money makes my mare to go. Money! said he, with a look of surprize; you have a poor opinion of Spanish charity, if you think that people of my stamp have any occasion for such trash upon their travels. Let me undeceive you. We are made welcome wherever we go, and pay for our board and lodgings by our prayers. In short, we carry no cash with us on the road; but draw drafts upon Providence. That is all very well, replied I; yet for fear your drafts should be dishonoured, you take care to keep about you a little supply for present need. But come, father, let us make an end:

my comrades in the wood are in a hurry; so your money or your life. At these words, which I pronounced with a determined air, the friar began to think the business grew serious. Since needs must, said he, there is wherewithal to satisfy your craving. A word and a blow is the only rhetoric with you gentlemen. As he said this, he drew a large leathern purse from under his gown, and threw it on the ground. I then told him he might make the best of his way: and he did not wait for a second bidding, but stuck his heels into the mule, which, giving the lie to my opinion, for I thought it on a par with my uncle's, set off at a good round pace. While he was riding for his life, I dismounted. The purse was none of the lightest. I mounted again, and got back to the wood, where those nice observers were waiting with impatience to congratulate me on my success. I could hardly get my foot out of the stirrup, so eager were they to shake hands with me. Courage, Gil Blas, said Rolando; you have done wonders. I have had my eyes on you during your whole performance, and have watched your countenance. I have no hesitation in predicting that you will become in time a very accomplished highwayman. The lieutenant and the rest chimed in with the prophecy, and assured me that I could not fail of fulfilling it hereafter. I thanked them for the elevated idea they had formed of my talents, and promised to do all in my power not to discredit their penetration.

After they had lavished praises, the effect rather of their candour than of my merit, they took it into their heads to examine the booty I had brought under my convoy. Let us see, said they, let us see how a friar's purse is lined. It should be fat and flourishing, continued one of them, for these good fathers do not mortify the flesh when they travel. The captain untied the purse, opened it, and took out two or three handfuls of little copper coins, an Agnus-Dei here and there, and some scapularies. At sight of so novel a prize, all the privates burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. God be praised! cried the lieutenant, we are very much obliged to Gil Blas: his first attack has produced a supply, very seasonable to our fraternity. One joke brought on another. These rascals, especially the fellow who had retired from the church to our subterraneous hermitage, began to make themselves merry on the subject.

They said a thousand good things, such as showed at once the sharpness of their wits and the profligacy of their morals. They were all on the broad grin except myself. It was impossible to be butt and marksman too. They each of them shot their bolt at me, and the captain said: Faith, Gil Blas, I would advise you as a friend not to set your wit a second time against the Church: the biter may be bit; for you must live some time longer among us, before you are a match for them.

CHAPTER IX

A MORE SERIOUS INCIDENT

We lounged about the wood for the greater part of the day, without lighting on any traveller to pay toll for the friar. At length we were beginning to wear our homeward way, as if confining the feats of the day to this laughable adventure, which furnished a plentiful fund of conversation, when we got intelligence of a carriage on the road drawn by four mules. They were coming at a hard gallop, with three outriders, who seemed to be well armed. Rolando ordered the troop to halt, and hold a council, the result of whose deliberations was to attack the enemy. We were regularly drawn up in battle-array, and marched to meet the caravan. In spite of the applause I had gained in the wood, I felt an oozing sort of tremor come over me, with a chill in my veins and a chattering in my teeth that seemed to bode me no good. As it never rains but it pours, I was in the front of the battle, hemmed in between the captain and the lieutenant, who had given me that post of honour, that I might lose no time in learning to stand fire. Rolando, observing the low ebb of my animal spirits, looked askew at me, and muttered in a tone more resolute than courtly: Hark ye! Gil Blas, look sharp about you! I give you fair notice, that if you play the recreant, I shall lodge a couple of bullets in your brain. I believed him as firmly as my catechism, and thought it high time not to neglect the hint; so that I was obliged to lay an embargo on the expression of my fears, and to think only of recommending my soul to God in silence.

While all this was going on, the carriage and horsemen

drew near. They suspected what sort of gentry we were; and guessing our trade by our badge, stopped within gunshot. They had carabines and pistols as well as ourselves. While they were preparing to give us a brisk reception, there jumped out of the coach a well-looking gentleman richly dressed. He mounted a led horse, and put himself at the head of his party. Though they were but four against nine, for the coachman kept his seat on the box, they advanced towards us with a confidence calculated to redouble my terror. Yet I did not forget, though trembling in every joint, to hold myself in readiness for a shot: but, to give a candid relation of the affair, I blinked and looked the other way in letting off my piece; so that from the harmlessness of my fire, I was sure not to have murder to answer for in another world.

I shall not give the particulars of the engagement; though present, I was no eye-witness; and my fear, while it laid hold of my imagination, drew a veil over the anticipated horror of the sight. All I know about the matter is, that after a grand discharge of musquetry, I heard my companions hallooing Victory! Victory! as if their lungs were made of leather. At this shout the terror which had made a forcible entry on my senses was ejected, and I beheld the four horsemen stretched lifeless on the field of battle. On our side, we had only one man killed. This was the renegade parson, who had now filled the measure of his apostasy, and paid for jesting with scapularies and such sacred things. The lieutenant received a slight wound in the arm; but the bullet did little more than graze the skin.

Master Rolando was the first at the coach-door. Within was a lady of from four to five-and-twenty, beautiful as an angel in his eyes, in spite of her sad condition. She had fainted during the conflict, and her swoon still continued. While he was fixed like a statue on her charms, the rest of us were in profound meditation on the plunder. We began by securing the horses of the defunct; for these animals, frightened at the report of our pieces, had got to a little distance, after the loss of their riders. For the mules, they had not wagged a hair, though the coachman had jumped from his box during the engagement to make his escape. We dismounted for the purpose of unharnessing and loading them with some trunks tied before and behind the carriage.

This settled, the captain ordered the lady, who had not yet recovered her faculties, to be set on horseback before the best mounted of the robbers; then, leaving the carriage and the uncased carcases by the road-side, we carried off with us the lady, the mules, and the horses.

CHAPTER X

THE LADY'S TREATMENT FROM THE ROBBERS. THE EVENT OF THE GREAT DESIGN, CONCEIVED BY GIL BLAS

THE night had another hour to run when we arrived at our subterraneous mansion. The first thing we did was to lead our cavalry to the stable, where we were obliged to groom them ourselves, as the old negro had been confined to his bed for three days, with a violent fit of the gout, and an universal rheumatism. He had no member supple but his tongue; and that he employed in testifying his indignation by the most horrible impieties. Leaving this wretch to curse and swear by himself, we went to the kitchen to look after the lady. So successful were our attentions, that we succeeded in recovering her from her fit. But when she had once more the use of her senses, and saw herself encompassed by strangers, she knew the extent of her misfortune, and shuddered at the thought. All that grief and despair together could present, of images the most distressing, appeared depicted in her eyes, which she lifted up to heaven, as if in reproach for the indignities she was threatened with. Then, giving way at once to these dreadful apprehensions, she fell again into a swoon, her eyelids closed once more, and the robbers thought that death was going to snatch from them their prey. The captain, therefore, judging it more to the purpose to leave her to herself than to torment her with any more of their assistance, ordered her to be laid on Leonarda's bed, and at all events to let nature take its course.

We went into the hall, where one of the robbers, who had been bred a surgeon, looked at the lieutenant's arm and put a plaister to it. After this scientific operation, it was thought expedient to examine the baggage. Some of the trunks were filled with laces and linen, others with various

articles of wearing apparel: but the last contained some bags of coin; a circumstance highly approved by the receivers-general of the estate. After this investigation, the cook set out the side-board, laid the cloth, and served up supper. Our conversation ran first on the great victory we had achieved. On this subject said Rolando, directing himself to me, Confess the truth, Gil Blas: you cannot deny that you were devilishly frightened. I candidly admitted the fact; but promised to fight like a crusader after my second or third campaign. Hereupon all the company took my part, alleging the sharpness of the action in my excuse, and that it was very well for a novice, not yet accustomed to the smell of powder.

We next talked of the mules and horses just added to our subterraneous stud. It was determined to set off the next morning before day-break, and sell them at Mansilla, before there was any chance of our expedition having got wind. This resolution taken, we finished our supper, and returned to the kitchen to pay our respects to the lady. We found her in the same condition. Nevertheless, though the dregs of life seemed almost exhausted, some of these poachers could not help casting a wicked leer at her, and giving visible sign of a motion within them, which would have broken out into overt act, had not Rolando put a spoke in their wheel by representing that they ought at least to wait till the lady had got rid of her terrors and squeamishness, and could come in for her share of the amusement. Their respect for the captain operated as a check to the incontinence of their passions. Nothing else could have saved the lady; nor would death itself probably have secured her from violation.

Again therefore did we leave this unhappy female to her melancholy fate. Rolando contented himself with charging Leonarda to take care of her, and we all separated for the night. For my part, when I went to bed, instead of courting sleep, my thoughts were wholly taken up with the lady's misfortunes. I had no doubt of her being a woman of quality, and thought her lot on that account so much the more piteous. I could not paint to myself, without shuddering, the horrors which awaited her; and felt myself as sensibly affected by them, as if united to her by the ties of blood or friendship. At length, after having sufficiently

bewailed her destiny, I mused on the means of preserving her honour from its present danger, and myself from a longer abode in this dungeon. I considered that the old negro could not stir, and recollected that since his illness the cook had the key of the grate. That thought warmed my fancy, and gave birth to a project not to be hazarded lightly: the stages of its execution were the following.

I pretended to have the colic. A lad in the colic cannot help whining and groaning; but I went further, and cried out lustily, as loud as my lungs would let me. This roused my gentle friends, and brought them about me to know what the deuce was the matter. I informed them that I had a swinging fit of the gripes, and to humour the idea, gnashed my teeth, made all manner of wry faces till I looked like a bedlamite, and twisted my limbs as if I had been going to be delivered of a heathen oracle. Then I became calm all at once, as if my pains had abated. The next minute I flounced up and down upon my bed, and threw my arms about at random. In a word, I played my part so well that these more experienced performers, knowing as they were, suffered themselves to be thrown off their guard, and to believe that my malady was real. All at once did they busy themselves for my relief. One brought me a bottle of brandy, and forced me to gulp down half of it; another, in spite of my remonstrances, applied oil of sweet almonds in a very offensive manner: a third went and made a napkin burning hot, to be clapped upon my stomach. In vain did I cry mercy; they attributed my noise to the violence of my disorder, and went on inflicting positive evil by way of remedy for that which was artificial. At last, able to bear it no longer, I was obliged to swear that I was better, and entreat them to give me quarter. They left off killing me with kindness, and I took care not to complain any more, for fear of experiencing their tender attentions a second time.

This scene lasted nearly three hours. After which the robbers, calculating it to be near daybreak, prepared for their journey to Mansilla. I was for getting up, as if I had set my heart on being of the party; but that they would not allow. No, no, Gil Blas, said Signor Rolando, stay here, my lad; your colic may return. You shall go with us another time; to-day you are not in travelling condition. I did not think it prudent to urge my attendance too much, for fear of

being taken at my word; but only affected great disappointment with so natural an air, that they all went off without the slightest misgiving of my design. After their departure, for which I had prayed most fervently, I said to myself: Now is your time, Gil Blas, to be firm and resolved. Arm yourself with courage to go through with an enterprise so propitiously begun. Domingo is tied by the leg, and Leonarda may show her teeth, but she cannot bite. Pounce down upon opportunity while it offers; you may wait long enough for another. Thus did I spirit myself up in soliloquy. Having got out of bed, I laid hold of my sword and pistols; and away I went to the kitchen. But before I made my appearance I stopped to hear what Leonarda was talking about to the fair incognita, who was come to her senses, and, on a view of her misfortune in its extremity, took on most desperately. That is right, my girl, said the old hag, cry your eyes out, sob away plentifully, you know the good effect of woman's tears. The sudden shock was too much for you; but the danger is over now the engines can play. Your grief will abate by little and little, and you will get reconciled to living with our gentlemen, who are very good sort of people. You will be better off than a princess. You do not know how fond they will be of you. Not a day will pass without your being obliged to some of them. Many a woman would give one of her eyes to be in your place.

I did not allow Leonarda time to go on any longer with this babbling. In I went, and putting a pistol to her breast, insisted with a menacing air on her delivering up the key of the grate. She did not know what to make of my behaviour; and, though almost in the last stage of life, had such a propensity to linger on the road as not to venture on a refusal. With the key in my hand I directed the following speech to the distressed object of my compassion: Madam, Heaven sends you a deliverer in me; follow, and I will see you safe whithersoever you wish to be conducted. The lady was not deaf to my proposal, which made such an impression on her grateful heart that she jumped up with all the strength she had left, threw herself at my feet, and conjured me to save her honour. I raised her from the ground, and assured her she might rely on me. I then took some ropes which were opportunely in the kitchen, and with her assistance tied Leonarda to the legs of a large table, protesting that I

would kill her if she only breathed a murmur. After that, lighting a candle, I went with the incognita to the treasury, where I filled my pockets with pistoles, single and double, as full as they could hold. To encourage the lady not to be scrupulous, I begged she would think herself at home, and make free with her own. With our finances thus recruited, we went towards the stable, where I marched in with my pistols cocked. I was of opinion that the old blackamoor, for all his gout and rheumatism, would not let me saddle and bridle my horse peaceably, and my resolution was to put a finishing hand to all his ailments if he took it into his head to play the churl: but, by good luck, he was at that moment in such pain that I stole the steed without his perceiving that the door was open. The lady in the meantime was waiting for me. We were not long in threading the passage leading to the outlet; but reached the grate, opened it, and at last got to the trap. Much ado there was to lift it, which we could not have done, but for the new strength we borrowed from the hopes of our escape.

Day was beginning to dawn when we emerged from that abyss. Our first object was to get as far from it as possible. I jumped into the saddle: the lady got up behind me, and taking the first path that offered, we soon galloped out of the forest. Coming to some cross-roads we took our chance. I trembled for fear of its leading to Mansilla, and our encountering Rolando and his comrades. Luckily my apprehensions were unfounded. We got to Astorga by two o'clock in the afternoon. The people looked at us as if they had never seen such a sight before as a woman riding behind a man. We alighted at the first inn. I immediately ordered a partridge and a young rabbit to the spit. While my orders were in a train of execution, the lady was shown to a room, where we began to scrape acquaintance with one another; which we had not done on the road, on account of the speed we made. She expressed a high sense of my services, and told me that after so gentlemanly a conduct, she could not allow herself to think me one of the gang from whom I had rescued her. I told her my story to confirm her good opinion. By these means I entitled myself to her confidence, and to the knowledge of her misfortunes, which she recounted to the following effect.

CHAPTER XI

THE HISTORY OF DONNA MENCIA DE MOSQUERA

I was born at Valladolid, and am called Donna Mencia de Mosquera. My father, Don Martin, after spending most of his family estate in the service, was killed in Portugal at the head of his regiment. He left me so little property, that I was a bad match, though an only daughter. I was not, however, without my admirers, notwithstanding the mediocrity of my fortune. Several of the most considerable cavaliers in Spain sought me in marriage. My favourite was Don Alvar de Mello. It is true he had a prettier person than his rivals; but more solid qualities determined me in his favour. He had wit, discretion, valour, probity; and in addition to all these, an air of fashion. Was an entertainment to be given? His taste was sure to be displayed. If he appeared in the lists, he always fixed the eyes of the beholders on his strength and dexterity. I singled him out from among all the rest, and married him.

A few days after our nuptials, he met Don Andrew de Baësa, who had been his rival, in a private place. They attacked one another sword in hand, and Don Andrew fell. As he was nephew to the corregidor of Valladolid, a turbulent man, violently incensed against the house of Mello, Don Alvar thought he could not soon enough make his escape. He returned home speedily, and told me what had happened while his horse was getting ready. My dear Mencia, said he at length, we must part. You know the corregidor: let us not flatter ourselves; he will hunt me even to death. You are unacquainted with his influence; this empire will be too hot to hold me. He was so penetrated by his own grief and mine as not to be able to articulate further. I made him take some cash and jewels: then he folded me in his arms, and we did nothing but mingle our sighs and tears for a quarter of an hour. In a short time the horse was at the door. He tore himself from me, and left me in a condition not easily to be expressed. It had been well if the excess of my affliction had destroyed me! How much pain and trouble might I have escaped by death! Some hours after Don Alvar was gone, the corregidor be-

came acquainted with his flight. He set up a hue and cry after him, sparing no pains to get him into his power. My husband, however, eluded his pursuit, and got into safe quarters; so that the judge, finding himself reduced to confine his vengeance to the poor satisfaction of confiscating, where he meant to execute, laboured to good purpose in his vocation. Don Alvar's little property all went to the hammer.

I remained in a very comfortless situation, with scarcely the means of subsistence. A retired life was best suited to my circumstances, with a single female servant. I passed my hours in lamenting, not an indigence, which I bore patiently, but the absence of a beloved husband, of whom I received no accounts. He had indeed pledged himself, in the melancholy moments of our parting, to be punctual in acquainting me with his destiny, to whatever part of the world his evil star might conduct him. And yet seven years rolled on without my hearing of him. My suspense respecting his fate afflicted me most deeply. At last I heard of his falling in battle, under the Portuguese banner, in the kingdom of Fez. A man newly returned from Africa brought me the account, with the assurance that he had been well acquainted with Don Alvar de Mello; had served with him in the army, and had seen him drop in the action. To this narrative of facts he added several collateral circumstances, which left me no room to doubt of my husband's premature death.

About this time Don Ambrosio Mesia Carillo, Marquis de la Guardia, arrived at Valladolid. He was one of those elderly noblemen who, with that good breeding acquired by long experience in courts, throw their years into the background, and retain the faculty of making themselves agreeable to our sex. One day he happened by accident to hear the story of Don Alvar; and, from the part I bore in it and the description of my person, there arose a desire of being better acquainted. To satisfy his curiosity, he made interest with one of my relations to invite me to her house. The gentleman was one of the party. This first interview made not the less impression on his heart for the traces of sorrow which were too obvious on my countenance. He was touched by its melancholy and languishing expression, which gave him a favourable forecast of my constancy.

Respect, rather than any warmer sentiment, might perhaps be the inspirer of his wishes. For he told me more than once what a miracle of good faith he considered me, and my husband's fate as enviable in this respect, however lamentable in others. In a word, he was struck with me at first sight, and did not wait for a review of my pretensions, but at once took the resolution of making me his wife.

The intervention of my kinswoman was adopted as the means of inducing me to accept his proposal. She paid me a visit; and in the course of conversation, pleaded, that as my husband had submitted to the decree of Providence in the kingdom of Fez, according to very credible accounts, it was no longer rational to coop up my charms. I had shed tears enough over a man to whom I had been united but for a few moments as it were, and I ought to avail myself of the present offer, and had nothing to do but to step into happiness at once. In furtherance of these arguments, she set forth the old marquis's pedigree, his wealth, and high character: but in vain did her eloquence expatiate on his endowments, for I was not to be moved. Not that my mind misgave me respecting Don Alvar's death; nor that the apprehension of his sudden and unwelcome appearance hereafter, checked my inclinations. My little liking, or rather my extreme repugnance, to a second marriage, after the sad issue of the first, was the sole obstacle opposed to my relation's urgency. Neither was she disheartened: on the contrary, her zeal for Don Ambrosio resorted to endless stratagems. All my family were pressed into the old lord's service. So beneficial a match was not to be trifled with! They were eternally besetting, dunning, and tormenting me. In fact, my despondency, which increased from day to day, contributed not a little to my yielding.

As there was no getting rid of him, I gave way to their eager suit, and was wedded to the Marquis de la Guardia. The day after the nuptials, we went to a very fine castle of his near Burgos, between Grajal and Rodillas. He conceived a violent love for me: the desire of pleasing was visible in all his actions: the anticipation of my slenderest wishes was his earliest and his latest study. No husband ever regarded his wife more tenderly, no lover could pour forth more devotion to his mistress. Nor would it have been possible for me to steel my heart against a return of

passion, though our ages were so disproportioned, had not every soft sentiment been buried in Don Alvar's grave. But the avenues of a constant heart are barred against a second inmate. The memory of my first husband threw a damp on all the kind efforts of the second. Mere gratitude was a cold retribution for such tenderness; but it was all I had to give.

Such was my temper of mind, when, taking the air one day at a window in my apartment, I perceived a peasant-looking man in the garden, viewing me with fixed attention. He appeared to be a common labourer. The circumstance soon passed out of my thoughts; but the next day, having again taken my station at the window, I saw him on the self-same spot, and again found myself the object of his eager gaze. This seemed strange! I looked at him in my turn; and, after an attentive scrutiny, thought I could trace the features of the unhappy Don Alvar. This seeming visit from the tombs roused all the dormant agony of my soul, and extorted from me a piercing scream. Happily, I was then alone with Inès, who of all my women engaged the largest share of my confidence. I told her what surmise had so agitated my spirits. She only laughed at the idea, and took it for granted that a slight resemblance had imposed on my fancy. Take courage, madam, said she, and do not be afraid of seeing your first husband. What likelihood is there of his being here in the disguise of a peasant? Is it even within the reach of credibility that he is yet alive? However, I will go down into the garden, and talk with this rustic. I will answer for finding out who he is, and will return in all possible haste with my intelligence. Inès ran on her errand like a lapwing; but soon returned to my apartment with a face of mingled astonishment and emotion. Madam, exclaimed she, your conjecture is but too well grounded; it is indeed Don Alvar whom you have seen; he made himself known at once, and pleads for a private interview.

As I had the means of admitting Don Alvar instantaneously, by the absence of the Marquis at Burgos, I commissioned my waiting-maid to introduce him into my closet by a private staircase. Well may you imagine the hurry and agitation of my spirits. How could I support the presence of a man, who was entitled to overwhelm me with

reproaches? I fainted at his very foot-fall as he entered. They were about me in a moment—he as well as Inès; and when they had recovered me from my swoon, Don Alvar said—Madam, for heaven's sake, compose yourself. My presence shall never be the cause of pain to you; nor would I for the world expose you to the slightest anxiety. I am no savage husband, come to account with you for a sacred pledge; nor do I impute to criminal motives the second contract you have formed. I am well aware that it was owing to the importunity of your friends; your persecutions from that quarter are not unknown to me. Besides, the report of my death was current in Valladolid; and you had so much the more reason to give it credit, as no letter from me gave you any assurance to the contrary. In short, I am no stranger to your habits of life since our cruel separation; and know that necessity, not lightness of heart, has thrown you into the arms . . . Ah! sir, interrupted I with sobs, why will you make excuses for your unworthy wife? She is guilty, since you survive. Why am I not still in the forlorn state in which I languished before my marriage with Don Ambrosio? Fatal nuptials!—alas! but for these, I should at least have had the consolation in my wretchedness of seeing the object of my first vows again without a blush.

My dear Mencia, replied Don Alvar, with a look which marked how deeply he was penetrated by my contrition, I make no complaint of you; and far from upbraiding you with your present prosperity, as heaven is my witness, I return it thanks for the favours it has showered on you. Since the sad day of my departure from Valladolid, my own fate has ever been adverse. My life has been but a tissue of misfortune; and, as a surcharge of evil destiny, I had no means of letting you hear from me. Too secure in your affection, I could neither think nor dream but of the condition to which my fatal love might have reduced you. Donna Mencia in tears was the lovely, but killing spectre that haunted me; of all my miseries, your dear idea was the most acute. Sometimes, I own, I felt remorse for the transporting crime of having pleased you. I wished you had lent an ear to the suit of some happier rival, since the preference with which you had honoured me was to fall so cruelly on your own head. To cut short my melancholy tale—after seven years' of suffering, more enamoured than

ever, I determined to see you once again. The impulse was not to be resisted; and the expiration of a long slavery having furnished me with the power of giving way to it, I have been at Valladolid under this disguise at the hazard of a discovery. There, I learned the whole story. I then came to this castle, and found the means of admission into the gardener's service, who has engaged me as a labourer. Such was my stratagem to obtain this private interview. But do not suppose me capable of blasting, by my continuance here, the happiness of your future days. I love you better than my own life; I have no consideration but for your repose; and it is my purpose, after thus unburdening my heart, to finish in exile the sacrifice of an existence which has lost its value since no longer to be devoted to your service.

No, Don Alvar, no, exclaimed I at these words; you shall never quit me a second time. I will be the companion of your wanderings; and death only shall divide us from this hour. Take my advice, replied he, live with Don Ambrosio; unite not yourself with my miseries, but leave me to stand under their undivided weight. These and other such entreaties he used; but the more willing he seemed to sacrifice himself to my welfare, the less did I feel disposed to take advantage of his generosity. When he saw me resolute in my determination to follow him, he all at once changed his tone; and assuming an aspect of more satisfaction, Madam, said he, since you still love Don Alvar well enough to prefer adversity with him before your present ease and affluence, let us then take up our abode at Bétancos, in the interior of Galicia. There I have a safe retreat. Though my misfortunes may have stripped me of all my effects, they have not alienated all my friends; some are yet faithful, and have furnished me with the means of carrying you off. With their help I have hired a carriage at Zamora; have bought mules and horses, and am accompanied by perhaps the three boldest of the Galicians. They are armed with carabines and pistols, waiting my orders at the village of Rodillas. Let us avail ourselves of Don Ambrosio's absence. I will send the carriage to the castle gate, and we will set out without loss of time. I consented. Don Alvar flew towards Rodillas, and shortly returned with his escort. My women, from the midst of whom I was carried off, not knowing what

to think of this violent proceeding, made their escape in great terror. Inès only was in the secret; but she would not link her fate with mine, on account of a love affair with Don Ambrosio's favourite man.

I got into the carriage, therefore, with Don Alvar, taking nothing with me but my clothes and some jewels of my own before my second marriage; for I could not think of appropriating any presents of the Marquis. We travelled in the direction of Galicia, without knowing if we should be lucky enough to reach it. We had reason to fear Don Ambrosio's pursuit on his return, and that we should be overtaken by superior numbers. We went forward for two days without any alarm, and in the hope of being equally fortunate the third, had got into a very quiet conversation. Don Alvar was relating the melancholy adventure which had occasioned the rumour of his death, and how he recovered his freedom after five years of slavery, when yesterday we met upon the Leon road the banditti you were with. He it was whom they killed with all his attendants, and it is for him the tears flow, which you see me shedding at this moment.

CHAPTER XII

A DISAGREEABLE INTERRUPTION

Donna Mencia melted into tears as she finished this recital. I allowed her to give a free passage to her sighs. I even wept myself for company, so natural is it to be interested for the afflicted, and especially for a lovely female in distress. I was just going to ask her what she meant to do in the present conjuncture, and possibly she was going to consult me on the same subject if our conversation had not been interrupted; but we heard a great noise in the inn, which drew our attention whether we would or no. It was no less than the arrival of the corregidor, attended by two alguazils and their marshalmen. They came into the room where we were. A young gentleman in their train came first up to me, and began taking to pieces the different articles of my dress. He had no occasion to examine them long. By Saint James, exclaimed he, this is my identical doublet! It is the very thing, and as safely to be challenged

as my horse. You may commit this spark on my recognizance; he is one of the gang who have an undiscovered retreat in this country.

At this discourse, which gave me to understand my accuser to be the gentleman robbed, whose spoils to my confusion were exclusively my own, I was without a word to say for myself, looking one way and the other, and not knowing where to fix my eyes. The corregidor, whose office was suspicion, set me down for the culprit; and, presuming on the lady for an accomplice, ordered us into separate custody. This magistrate was none of your stern gallows-preaching fellows, he had a jocular epigrammatic sort of countenance. God knows if his heart lay in the right place for all that! As soon as I was committed, in came he with his pack. They knew their trade, and began by searching me. What a forfeit to these lords of the manor! At every handful of pistoles, what little eyes did I see them make! The corregidor was absolutely out of his wits! It was the best stroke within the memory of justice! My pretty lad, said his Worship with a softened tone, we only do our duty, but do not you tremble for your bones before the time: you will not be broken on the wheel if you do not deserve it. These blood-suckers were emptying my pockets all the time with their cursed palaver, and took from me what their betters of the shades below had the decency to leave—my uncle's forty ducats. They stuck at nothing! Their staunch fingers, with slow but certain scent, routed me out from top to toe; they whisked me round and round, and stripped me even to the shame of modesty, for fear some sneaking portrait of the king should slink between my shirt and skin. When they could sift me no further, the corregidor thought it time to begin his examination. I told a plain tale. My deposition was taken down; and the sequel was, that he carried in his train his bloodhounds, and my little property, leaving me to toss without a rag upon a beggarly wisp of straw.

Oh the miseries of human life! groaned I, when I found myself in this merciless and solitary condition. Our adventures here are whimsical, and out of all time and tune. From my first outset from Oviedo, I had got into a pleasant round of difficulties; hardly had I worked myself out of one danger, before I soused into another. Coming into town here, how

could I expect the honour of the corregidor's acquaintance? While thus communing with my own thoughts, I got once more into the cursed doublet and the rest of the paraphernalia which had got me into such a scrape; then plucking up a little courage, never mind, Gil Blas, thought I, do not be chicken-hearted. What is a prison above-ground, after so brimstone a snuffle as thou hast had of the regions below? But, alas! I hallo before I am out of the wood! I am in more experienced hands than those of Leonarda and Domingo. My key will not open this grate! I might well say so, for a prisoner without money is like a bird with its wings clipt; one must be in full feather to flutter out of distance from these gaol-birds.

But we left a partridge and a young rabbit on the spit! How they got off I know not; but my supper was a bit of sallow-complexioned bread, with a pitcher of water to render it amenable to mastication! and thus was I destined to bite the bridle in my dungeon. A fortnight was pretty well without seeing a soul but my keeper, who had orders that I should want for nothing in the bread and water way! Whenever he made his appearance I was inclined to be sociable, and to parley a little to get rid of the blue devils: but this majestic minister was above reply, he was mum! he scarcely trusted his eyes but to see that I did not slip by him. On the sixteenth day, the corregidor strutted in to this tune—You are a lucky fellow! I have news for you. The lady is packed off for Burgos. She came under my examination before her departure, and her answers went to your exculpation. You will be at large this very day if your carrier from Pegnaflor to Cacabelos agrees in the same tale. He is now in Astorga. I have sent for him, and expect him here; if he confirms the story of the torture, you are your own master.

At these words I was ready to jump out of my skin for joy. The business was settled! I thanked the magistrate for the abridgement of justice with which he had deigned to favour me, and was getting to the fag end of my compliment, when the muleteer arrived, with an attendant before and behind. I knew the fellow's face; but he, having as a matter of course sold my cloak-bag with the contents, from a deep-rooted affection to the money which the sale had brought, swore lustily that he had no acquaintance with me, and had never

seen me in the whole course of his life. Oh! you villain, exclaimed I, go down on your knees and own that you have sold my clothes. Prythee, have some regard to truth! Look in my face; am not I one of those shallow young fellows whom you had the wit to threaten with the rack in the corporate town of Cacabelos? The muleteer turned upon his toe, and protested he had not the honour of my acquaintance. As he persisted in his disavowal, I was re-committed for further examination. Patience once more! It was only reducing feasts and fasts to the level of bread and water, and regaling the only sense I had the means of using with the sight of my tongue-tied warden. But when I reflected how little innocence would avail to extricate me from the clutches of the law, the thought was death; I panted for my subterraneous paradise. Take it for all in all, said I, there were fewer grievances than in this dungeon. I was hail fellow well met with the banditti! I bandied about my jokes with the best of them, and lived on the sweet hope of an escape; whereas my innocence here will only be a passport to the galleys.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LUCKY MEANS BY WHICH GIL BLAS ESCAPED FROM PRISON, AND HIS TRAVELS AFTERWARDS

WHILE I passed the hours in tickling my fancy with my own gay thoughts, my adventures, word for word, as I had set my hand to them, were current about the town. The people wanted to make a show of me! One after another, there they came, peeping in at a little window of my prison, not too capacious of daylight; and when they had looked about them, off they went! This raree-show was a novelty. Since my commitment, there had not been a living creature at that window, which looked into a court where silence and horror kept guard. This gave me to understand that I was become the town-talk, and I knew not whether to divine good or evil from the omen.

One of my first visitors was the little chorister of Mondog-nedo, who had a fellow-feeling with me for the rack, and an equally light pair of heels. I knew him at once, and he had

no qualms about acknowledging me as an acquaintance. We exchanged a kind greeting, then compared notes since our separation. I was obliged to relate my adventures in due form and order. The chorister, on his part, told me what had happened in the inn at Cacabelos, between the muleteer and the bride, after we had taken to our heels in a panic. Then with a friendly assurance at parting, he promised to leave no stone unturned for my release. His companions of mere curiosity testified their pity for my misfortune; assuring me that they would lend a helping hand to the little chorister, and do their utmost to procure my freedom.

They were no worse than their word. The corregidor was applied to in my favour, who, no longer doubtful of my innocence, above all when he had heard the chorister's story, came three weeks afterwards into my cell. Gil Blas, said he, I never stand shilly-shally: begone, you are free; you may take yourself off whenever you please. But, tell me, if you were carried to the forest, could you not discover the subterraneous retreat? No, sir, replied I: as I only entered in the night, and made my escape before day-break, it would be impossible to fix upon the spot. Thereupon the magistrate withdrew, assuring me that the gaoler should be ordered to give me free egress. In fact, the very next moment the turnkey came into my dungeon, followed by one of his outriding establishment, with a bundle of clothes under his arm. They both of them stripped me with the utmost solemnity, and without uttering a single syllable, of my doublet and breeches, which had the honour to be made of a bettermost cloth almost new; then, having rigged me in an old frock, they shoved me out of their hospitable mansion by the shoulders.

The taking I was in to see myself so ill equipped, acted as a cooler to the usual transport of prisoners at recovering their liberty. I was tempted to escape from the town without delay, that I might withdraw from the gaze of the people, whose prying eyes I could not encounter but with pain. My gratitude, however, got the better of my diffidence. I went to thank the little chorister, to whom I was so much obliged. He could not help chuckling when he saw me. That is your trim, is it? said he. As far as I see, you cannot complain that your case has not been sifted to the

bottom. I have nothing to say against the laws of my country, replied I; they are just as need be. I only wish their officers would take after them! They might have spared me my suit of clothes: I have paid for them over and over again. I am quite of your mind, rejoined he; but they would tell you that these are little formalities of old standing, which cannot be dispensed with. What! you are foolish enough to suppose, for instance, that your horse has been restored to its right owner? Not a word of it, if you please: the beast is at this present in the stables of the register, where it has been impounded as a witness to be brought into court: if the poor gentleman comes off with the crupper, he will be so much in pocket. But let us change the subject. What is your plan? What do you mean to do with yourself? I have an inclination, said I, to take the road for Burgos. I may light on my rescued lady; she will give me a little ready cash: I shall then buy a new short cassock, and betake myself to Salamanca, where I shall see what I can make of my Latin. All my trouble is, how to get to Burgos: one must live on the road. I understand you, replied he. Take my purse: it is rather thinly lined, to be sure; but you know a chorister's dividends are not like a bishop's. At the same time he drew it from his pouch, and inserted it between my hands with so good a grace, that I could not do otherwise than accept it, for want of a better. I thanked him as though he had made me a present of a gold mine, and tendered him a thousand promises of recompense, to be duly honoured and punctually paid at doom's-day. With this I left him, and skulked out of the town, not paying my respects to my other benefactors; but giving them a thousand blessings from my heart.

The little chorister had reason for speaking modestly of his purse, it was not orthodox. By good luck, I had been used for these two months to a very slender diet, and had still a little small change left when I reached Ponte de Mula, not far from Burgos. I halted there to enquire after Donna Mencia. The hostess of the inn I put up at was a little withered, spiteful, emaciated bit of mortality. I saw at a glance, by the mouths she made at me aside, that my frock did not hit her fancy; and I thought it a proof of her taste. So I sat myself down at a table; ate bread and cheese, and drank a few glasses of execrable wine, such as innkeepers

technically call cassecoquin. During this meal, which was of a piece with the outward appearance of the guest, I did my utmost to come to closer quarters with my landlady. Did she know the Marquis de la Guardia? Was his castle far out of town? Above all, what was become of my lady marchioness? You ask many questions in a breath, replied she, bridling with disdain. But I got out of her, though by hard pumping, that Don Ambrosio's castle was but a short league from Ponte de Mula.

After I had done eating and drinking, as it was night, I thought it natural to go to bed, and asked for my room. A room for you! shrieked my landlady, darting at me a glance of contempt and pride; I have no rooms for fellows who make their supper on a bit of cheese. All my beds are bespoke. There are people of fashion expected, and our accommodations are all kept for them. But I will not be unchristian: you may lie in my barn: I suppose your soft skin will not be incommoded by the feel of straw. She spoke truth without knowing it. I took it all in silence, and slunk to my roosting-place, where I fell asleep like a man, the excess of whose labours are his ready passport to the blessings of repose.

CHAPTER XIV

DONNA MENCIA'S RECEPTION OF HIM AT BURGOS

I was no sluggard, but got up the next morning betimes. I paid my bill to the landlady, who was already stirring, and seemed a little less lofty and in better humour than the evening before; a circumstance I attributed to the endeavours of three kind guardsmen belonging to the holy brotherhood. These gentlemen had slept in the inn: they were evidently on a very intimate footing with the hostess: and doubtless it was for guests of such note that all the beds were bespoke.

I inquired in the town my way to the castle where I wanted to present myself. By accident I made up to a man not unlike my landlord at Pegnaflor. He was not satisfied with answering my question to the point; but informed me that Don Ambrosio had been dead three weeks, and the

marchioness his lady had taken the resolution of retiring to a convent at Burgos, which he named. I proceeded immediately towards that town, instead of taking the road to the castle, as I had first meant to do, and flew at once to the place of Donna Mencia's retreat. I besought the attendant at the turning-box to tell that lady that a young man just discharged from prison at Astorga wanted to speak with her. The nun went on the message immediately. On her return she showed me into a parlour, where I did not wait long before Don Ambrosio's widow appeared at the grate in deep mourning.

You are welcome, said the lady. Four days ago I wrote to a person at Astorga, to pay you a visit as from me, and to tell you to come and see me the moment you were released from prison. I had no doubt of your being discharged shortly: what I told the corregidor in your exculpation was enough for that. An answer was brought that you had been set at liberty, but that no one knew what was become of you. I was afraid of not seeing you any more, and losing the pleasure of expressing my gratitude. Never mind, added she, observing my confusion at making my appearance in so wretched a garb; your dress is of very little consequence. After the important services you have rendered me, I should be the most ungrateful of my sex, if I were to do nothing for you in return. I undertake, therefore, to better your condition: it is my duty, and the means are in my power. My fortune is large enough to pay my debt of obligation to you, without putting myself to inconvenience.

You know, continued she, my story up to the time when we both were committed to prison. I will now tell you what has happened to me since. When the corregidor at Astorga had sent me to Burgos, after having heard from my own lips a faithful recital of my adventures, I presented myself at the castle of Ambrosio. My return thither excited extreme surprise: but they told me that it was too late; the marquis, as if he had been thunderstruck at my flight, fell sick; and the physicians despaired of his recovery. Here was a new incident in the melancholy tragedy of my fate. Yet I ordered my arrival to be announced. The next moment I ran into his chamber, and threw myself on my knees by his bedside, with a face running down with tears and a heart oppressed with the most lively sorrow.

Who sent for you hither? said he as soon as he saw me; are you come to contemplate your own contrivance? Was it not enough to have deprived me of life? But was it necessary to satisfy your heart's desire, to be an eye-witness of my death? My lord, replied I, Inès must have told you that I fled with my first husband; and, had it not been for the sad accident which has taken him from me for ever, you never would have seen me more. At the same time, I acquainted him that Don Alvar had been killed by a banditti, whose captive I had consequently been in a subterraneous dungeon. After relating the particulars of my story to the end, Don Ambrosio held out to me his hand. It is enough, said he affectionately, I will make no more complaints. Alas! Have I in fact any right to reproach you? You were thrown once more in the way of a beloved husband; and gave me up to follow his fortunes: can I blame such an instance of your affection? No, madam, it would have been vain to resist the will of fate. For that reason I gave orders not to pursue you. In my rival himself I could not but respect the sacred rights with which he was invested, and even the impulse of your flight seemed to have been communicated by some superior power. To close all with an act of justice, and in the spirit of reconciliation, your return hither has re-established you completely in my affection. Yes, my dear Mencia, your presence fills me with joy: but, alas! I shall not long be sensible to it. I feel my last hour to be at hand. No sooner are you restored to me, than I must bid you an eternal farewell. At these touching expressions, my tears flowed in torrents. I felt and expressed as much affliction as the human heart is capable of containing. I question whether Don Alvar's death, doting on him as I did, had cost me more bitter lamentations. Don Ambrosio had given way to no mistaken presage of his death, which happened on the following day; and I remained mistress of a considerable jointure, settled on me at our marriage. But I shall take care to make no unworthy use of it. The world shall not see me, young as I still am, wantoning in the arms of a third husband. Besides that such levity seems irreconcileable with the feelings of any but the profligate of our sex, I will frankly own the relish of life to be extinct in me; so that I mean to end my days in this convent, and to become a benefactress to it.

Such was Donna Mencia's discourse about her future plans. She then drew a purse from beneath her robe, and put it into my hands, with this address: Here are a hundred ducats simply to furnish out your wardrobe. That done, come and see me again. I mean not to confine my gratitude within such narrow bounds. I returned her a thousand thanks, and promised solemnly not to quit Burgos, without taking leave of her. Having given this pledge, which I had every inclination to redeem, I went to look out for some house of entertainment. Entering the first I met with, I asked for a room. To parry the ill opinion my frock might convey of my finances, I told the landlord that, however appearances might be against me, I could pay for my night's lodging as well as a better dressed gentleman. At this speech, the landlord, whose name was Majuelo, a great banterer in a coarse way, running over me with his eyes from top to toe, answered with a cool, sarcastic grin, that there was no need of any such assurance; It was evident I should pay my way liberally, for he discovered something of nobility through my disguise, and had no doubt but I was a gentleman in very easy circumstances. I saw plainly that the rascal was laughing at me; and, to stop his humour before it became too convulsive, gave him a little insight into the state of my purse. I went so far as to count over my ducats on a table before him, and perceived my coin to have inclined him to a more respectful judgment. I begged the favour of him to send for a tailor. A broker would be better, said he; he will bring all sorts of apparel, and you will be dressed up out of hand. I approved of this advice, and determined to follow it; but, as the day was on the point of closing, I put off my purchase till the morrow, and thought only of getting a good supper, to make amends for the miserable fare I had taken up with since my escape from the forest.

CHAPTER XV

GIL BLAS DRESSES HIMSELF TO MORE ADVANTAGE, AND RECEIVES A SECOND PRESENT FROM THE LADY. HIS EQUIPAGE ON SETTING OUT FROM BURGOS.

THEY served me up a plentiful fricassee of sheep's trotters, almost the whole of which I demolished. My drinking kept pace with my eating: and when I could stuff no longer, I went to bed. I lay comfortably enough, and was in hopes that a sound sleep would have the kindness without delay to commit a friendly invasion on my senses. But I could not close an eye for ruminating on the dress I should choose. What shall I do, thought I? Shall I follow my first plan? Shall I buy a short cassock, and go to Salamanca to set up for a tutor? Why should I adopt the costume of a licentiate? For the purpose of going into orders? Do I feel an inward call? No? If I have any call, it is quite the contrary way. I had rather wear a sword than an apron: and push my fortune in this world, before I think of the next.

I made up my mind to take on myself the appearance of a gentleman. Waiting for the day with the greatest impatience, its first dawn no sooner greeted my eyes, than I got up. I made such an uproar in the inn, as to wake the most inveterate sleeper, and called the servants out of bed, who returned my salute with a volley of curses. But they found themselves under a necessity of stirring, and I let them have no rest till they had sent for a broker. The gentleman soon made his appearance, followed by two lads, each lugging in a great bundle of green cloth. He accosted me very civilly, to the following effect: Honoured sir, you are a happy man to have been recommended to me rather than any one else. I do not mean to give my brethren an ill word: God forbid I should offer the slightest injury to their reputation! They have none to spare. But, between ourselves, there is not one of them that has any bowels; they are more extortionate than the Israelites. There is not a broker but myself that has any moral sense. I keep within the bounds of a reasonable profit. I am satisfied with a pound in the penny;—no, no!—that is wrong:—with a penny in the pound. Thanks to heaven I get forward fair and softly in the world.

The broker, after this preface, which I, like a fool, took for chapter and verse, told his journeymen to undo their bundles. They showed me suits of every colour in the rainbow, and exposed to sale a great choice of plain cloths. These I threw aside with contempt, as thinking them too undrest; but they made me try on one which fitted me as well as if I had been measured for it, and just hit my fancy, though it was a little the worse for wear. It was a doublet with slashed sleeves, with breeches and a cloak, the whole of blue velvet with a gold embroidery. I felt a little hankering after this particular article, and attempted to beat down the price. The broker, who saw my inclination, told me I had a very correct taste. By all that is sacred! exclaimed he, it is plain you are no younker. Take this with you! That dress was made for one of the first nobility in the kingdom, and has not been on his back three times. Look at the velvet; feel it: nothing can be richer or of a better colour; and for the embroidery, come now! tell truth: did you ever see better workmanship? What is the price of it, said I. Only sixty ducats, replied he. I have refused the money, or else I am a liar. The alternative could not fail in one proposition or the other. I bid five and forty: two or three and twenty would have been nearer the mark. My worthy master, said the broker coolly, I never ask too much. I have but one price. But here, added he, holding up the suits I had thrown aside; take these: I can afford to sell them a better bargain. All this only inflamed my eagerness to buy what I was cheapening; and as I had no idea that he would have made any abatement, I paid him down sixty ducats. When he saw how easily a fool and his money were parted, I verily believe that in spite of the moral sense, he heartily repented not having taken a hint from the extortionate Israelite. But reconciling himself as well as he could to the small profit, to which he professed to confine himself, of a pound upon a penny, he retreated with his journeymen. I was not suffered to forget that they must have something for their trouble.

I had now a cloak, a doublet, and a very decent pair of breeches. The rest of my wardrobe was to be thought of: and this took up the whole morning. I bought some linen, a hat, silk stockings, shoes, and a sword; and concluded by putting on my purchases. What pleasure was it

to see myself so well accoutered! My eyes were never cloyed, as it were, with the richness of my attire. Never did peacock look at his own plumage with less philosophy. On that very day, I paid a second visit to Donna Mencia, who received me with her usual affability. She thanked me over again for the service I had rendered her. On that subject, rapid was the interchange of compliments. Then, wishing every kind of success, she bade me farewell, and withdrew, without giving me anything but a ring worth thirty pistoles, which she begged me to keep as a remembrance.

I looked very foolish with my ring! I had reckoned on a much more considerable present. Thus, little satisfied with the lady's bounty, I measured back my steps in a very musing attitude: but as I entered the inn door, a man overtook me, and throwing off his wrapping cloak, discovered a large bag under his arm. At the vision of the bag, apparently full of current coin, I stood gaping as did most of the company present. The voice of angel or archangel could not have been sweeter, than when this messenger of earthly dross, laying the bag upon the table, said: Signor Gil Blas, the lady marchioness desires her compliments. I bowed the bearer out, with an accumulation of fine speeches; and, as soon as his back was turned, pounced upon the bag, like a hawk upon its quarry, and bore it between my talons to my chamber. I untied it without loss of time, and the contents were;—a thousand ducats! The landlord who had overheard the bearer, came in just as I had done counting them, to know what was in the bag. The sight of my riches displayed upon a table, struck him in a very forcible manner. What the devil! here is a sum of money! So, so! you are the man! pursued he with a waggish sort of leer, you know how to—tickle the—fancies of the ladies! Four and twenty hours only have you been in Burgos, and marchionesses, I warrant you, have surrendered at the first summons!

This discourse was not so much amiss. I was half inclined to leave Majuelo in his error; for it flattered my vanity. I do not wonder young fellows are fond of passing for men of gallantry. But as yet the purity of my morals was proof against the suggestions of my pride. I undeceived my landlord, by telling him Donna Mencia's story, to which he listened very attentively. Afterwards I let him into the

state of my affairs; and, as he seemed to take an interest in them, besought him to assist me with his advice. He ruminated for some time; then said with a serious air: Master Gil Blas, I have taken a liking to you; and since you are candid enough to open your heart to me, I will tell you sincerely what I think would suit you best. You were evidently born for a court life: I recommend you to go thither, and to get about the person of some considerable nobleman. But make a point either of getting at his secrets, or administering to his pleasures; unless you do that, it will be all lost time in his family. I know the great: they reckon nothing upon the zeal and attachment of a real friend; but only care for pimping sycophants. You have, besides, another string to your bow. You are young, with an attractive person: parts out of the question, for they are not at all times necessary, it is hard if you cannot turn the head of some rich widow, or handsome wife with a broomstick for her husband. Love may ruin men of fortune; but it makes amends by feathering the nests of those who have none. My vote, therefore, is for Madrid: but you must not make your appearance there without an establishment. There, as elsewhere, people judge by the outside; and you will only be respected according to the figure you make. I will find you a servant, a tried domestic, a prudent lad; in a word, a fellow of my own creation. Buy a couple of mules; one for yourself, the other for him: and set off as fast as you can.

This counsel was too palatable to be refused. On the day following I purchased two fine mules, and bargained with my new servant. He was a young man of thirty, of a very simple and godly appearance. He told me he was a native of Galicia, by name Ambrose de Lamela. Other servants are selfish, and think they never can have wages enough. This fellow assured me he was a man of few wants, and should be contented with whatever I had the goodness to give him. I bought a pair of boots, with a portmanteau to lock up my linen and my money. Having settled with my landlord, I set out from Burgos the next morning before sun-rise, on my way to Madrid.

CHAPTER XVI

SHOWING THAT PROSPERITY WILL SLIP THROUGH A MAN'S FINGERS

We slept at Duengnas the first night, and reached Valladolid on the following day, about four o'clock in in the afternoon. We alighted at the inn of the most respectable appearance in the town. I left the care of the mules to my fellow, and went up to a room whither I ordered my portmanteau to be carried by a waiter. As I felt a little weary, I threw myself on a couch in my boots, and fell asleep involuntarily. It was almost night when I awoke. I called for Ambrose. He was not to be found in the house; but made his appearance in a short time. I asked him where he had been: he answered in his godly way, that he was just come from church, whither he went for the purpose of thanksgiving, by reason that we had been graciously preserved from all perils and dangers between Burgos and Valladolid. I commended his piety; and ordered a chicken to be roasted for supper.

At the moment when I was giving this order, my landlord came into my room with a light in his hand. That cursed candle served to introduce a lady, handsome, but not young, and very richly attired. She leant upon an usher, none of the youngest, and a little blackamoor was her train-bearer. I was under no small surprise when this fair incognita, with a profound obeisance, begged to know if my name might happen to be Signor Gil Blas of Santillane? I had no sooner blundered out yes, than she released her sweet hand from the custody of the usher, and embraced me with a transport of joy, of which I knew less and less what to make. Heaven be praised, cried she, for all its mercies! You are he, noble sir, the very man of whom I was in quest. By this introduction I was reminded of my friend the parasite at Pegnaflor, and was on the point of suspecting the lady to be no better than an honest woman should be: but her finale gave me a much higher opinion of her. I am, continued she, first cousin to Donna Mencia de Mosquera, whom you have so greatly befriended. It was but this morning I received a letter from her. She writes me word that having learnt

your intention of going to Madrid, she wished me to receive you hospitably on your journey, if you went this way. For these two hours have I been parading the town. From inn to inn have I gone to inform myself what strangers were in the house; and I gathered from the landlord's description that you were most likely to have been my cousin's deliverer. Since then I have found you out, you shall know by experience my gratitude to the friends of my family, and especially to my dear cousin's hero. You will take up your abode, if you please, at my house. Your accommodations will be better. I wished to excuse myself; and told the lady that I could not be so troublesome: but her importunities were more than a match for my modesty. A carriage was waiting at the door of the inn to convey us. She saw my portmanteau taken care of with her own eyes, because, as she justly observed, there were a great many light-fingered gentry about Valladolid—to be sure there were a great many light-fingered gentry about Valladolid, as she justly observed! In short, I got into the carriage with her and the old usher, and suffered myself to be carried off bodily from the inn, to the great annoyance of the landlord, who saw himself thus weaned from all the little perquisites he had reckoned on from my abode under his roof.

Our carriage, having rolled on some distance, stopped. We alighted at the door of a handsome house, and went up-stairs into a well-furnished apartment, illuminated by twenty or thirty wax candles. Several servants were in waiting, of whom the lady inquired whether Don Raphael was come. They answered, No. She then addressed herself to me: Signor Gil Blas, I am waiting for my brother's return from a country seat of ours, about two leagues distant. What an agreeable surprise will it be to him to find a man under his roof to whom our family is so much indebted! At the very moment she had finished this pretty speech we heard a noise, and were informed at the same time that it was occasioned by the arrival of Don Raphael. This spark soon made his appearance. He was a young man of portly figure and genteel manners. I am in an ecstacy to see you back again, brother, said the lady; you will assist me in doing the honours to Signor Gil Blas of Santillane. We can never do enough to show our sense of his kindness to our kinswoman, Donna Mencia. Here, read

this letter I have just received. Don Raphael opened the envelope, and read aloud as follows: "My dear Camilla, Signor Gil Blas of Santillane, the saviour of my honour and my life, has just set out for court. He will of course pass through Valladolid. I conjure you by our family connection, and still more by our indissoluble friendship, to give him an hospitable reception, and to detain him for some time as your guest. I flatter myself that you will so far oblige me, and that my deliverer will receive every kind of polite attention from yourself, and my cousin, Don Raphael. Your affectionate cousin,

"*Burgos.* DONNA MENCIA."

What! cried Don Raphael, casting his eyes again over the letter, is it to this gentleman my kinswoman owes her honour and her life? Then heaven be praised for this happy meeting. With this sort of language, he advanced towards me; and squeezing me tightly in his arms: What joy to me is it, added he, to have the honour of seeing Signor Gil Blas of Santillane! My cousin the marchioness had no need to press the hospitality. Had she only told us simply that you were passing through Valladolid, that would have been enough. My sister Camilla and I shall be at no loss how to conduct ourselves towards a young gentleman who has conferred an obligation, not to be repaid, on her of all our family most tenderly beloved by us. I made the best answer I could to these speeches, which were followed by many others of the same kind, and interlarded with a thousand bows and scrapes. But Lord bless me, he has his boots on! The servants were ordered in, to take them off.

We next went into another room, where the cloth was lain. Down we sat at table, the brother, sister, and myself. They paid me a hundred compliments during supper. Not a word escaped me, but they magnified it into an admirable hit! It was impossible not to observe the assiduity with which they both helped me out of every dish. Don Raphael often pledged me to Donna Mencia's health. I could not refuse the challenge; and it looked a little as if Camilla, who was a very good companion, ogled at me with no questionable meaning. I even thought I could perceive that she watched her opportunity, as if she was afraid of being detected by her brother. An oracle could not have convinced me more firmly that the lady was caught; and I

looked forward to a little delicate amusement from the discovery, during the short time I was to stay at Valladolid. That hope was my tempter to comply with the request they made me, of condescending to pass a few days with them. They thanked me kindly for indulging them with my company; and Camilla's restrained, but visible transport, confirmed me in the opinion that I was not altogether disagreeable in her eyes.

Don Raphael, finding I had made up my mind to be his guest for a few days, proposed to take me to his country house. The description of it was magnificent, and the round of amusements he meditated for me was not to be described. At one time, said he, we will take the diversion of the chase, at another that of fishing; and whenever you have a mind for a saunter, we have charming woods and gardens. In addition, we shall have agreeable society. I flatter myself you will not find the time hang heavy on your hands. I accepted the invitation, and it was agreed that we should go to this fine country house the following day. We rose from the table with this pleasant scheme in our mouths. Don Raphael seemed in ecstacy. Signor Gil Blas, said he, embracing me, I leave you with my sister. I am going presently to give the necessary orders, and send invitations round to the families I wish to be of the party. With these words he sallied forth from the room where we were sitting. I went on chatting with the lady, whose topics of discourse did not bely the glances of her expressive eyes. She took me by the hand, and playing with my ring, You have a mighty pretty brilliant there, said she, but it is small. Are you a judge of jewellery? I answered, no! I am sorry for that, resumed she, because I was in hopes you could have told me what this is worth. As she uttered these words, she showed me a large ruby on her finger; and, while I was looking at it, said—An uncle of mine, who was governor of the Spanish settlements in the Philippine isles, gave me this ruby. The jewellers at Valladolid value it at three hundred pistoles. It cannot be worth less, said I, for it is evidently a very fine stone. Why, then, since you have taken a fancy to it, replied she, an exchange is no robbery. In a twinkling she whisked off my ring, and placed her own on my little finger. After this exchange, a genteel way enough of making a present, Camilla pressed my hand and gazed at me

with expressive tenderness; then, all at once breaking off the conversation, wished me good night, and retired to hide her blushes, as if she had been ready to sink at the indiscreet avowal of her sentiments.

No one hitherto had trod less in the paths of gallantry than myself! Yet I could not shut my eyes to the vista vision opened to me by this precipitate retreat. Under these circumstances, a country excursion might have its charms. Full of this flattering idea, and intoxicated with the prosperous condition of my affairs, I locked myself into my bed-room, after having told my servant to call me betimes in the morning. Instead of going to sleep, I gave myself up to the agreeable reflections which my portmanteau, snug upon the table, and my ruby excited in my breast. Heaven be praised, thought I, though misfortunes have been my lot, I am unfortunate no longer. A thousand ducats here, a ring of three hundred pistoles' value there! I am in cash for a considerable time. Indeed Majuelo was no flatterer, I see clearly. The ladies of Madrid will take fire like touchwood, since the green sticks of Valladolid are so inflammable. Then the kind regards of the generous Camilla arrayed themselves in all their charms, and I tasted by anticipation the amusements Don Raphael was preparing for me at his villa. In the meanwhile, amid so many images of pleasure, sleep was on the watch to strew his poppies on my couch. As soon as I felt myself drowsy, I undressed and went to bed.

The next morning, when I awoke, I found it rather late. It was odd enough that my servant did not make his appearance, after such particular orders. Ambrose, thought I to myself, my devout Ambrose is either at church, or abominably lazy this morning. But I soon let go this opinion of him to take up a worse; for getting out of bed, and seeing no portmanteau, I suspected him to have stolen it during the night. To clear up my suspicions, I opened my chamber door, and called the religious rascal over and over again. An old man answered, saying—What is your pleasure, sir? All your folks left my house before day-break. Your house! How now! exclaimed I; am I not under Don Raphael's roof? I do not know the gentleman, said he. You are in a ready-furnished lodging, and I am the landlord. Yesterday evening, an hour before your arrival, the lady who supped

with you came hither, and engaged this suite of apartments for a nobleman of high rank, travelling *incognito*, as she called it. She paid me beforehand. I was now in the secret. It was plain enough what sort of people Camilla and Don Raphael were; and I conjectured that my servant, having wormed himself into a complete knowledge of my concerns, had betrayed me to these impostors. Instead of blaming myself for this sad accident, and considering that it could never have happened but for my indiscretion in so unnecessarily betraying my confidence to Majuelo, I gave bad language to the poor harmless dame fortune, and cursed my ill star in a hundred different formularies. The master of the ready-furnished lodging, to whom I related the adventure, which perhaps was as much his as mine, showed some little outward sensibility to my affliction. He lamented over me, and protested he was deeply mortified that such a play should have been acted in his house; but I verily believe, notwithstanding his fine words, that he had an equal share in the cheat with mine host at Burgos, to whom I have never denied the merit of so ingenious an invention.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MEASURES GIL BLAS TOOK AFTER THE ADVENTURE OF THE READY-FURNISHED LODGING

After the first transports of my grief were over, I began to consider, that instead of giving way to remorse, I ought rather to bear up against my ill fate. I summoned back my resolution, and, by way of comfort, said to myself as I was dressing—I am still in luck that the knaves have not carried off my clothes and what little money I had in my pocket. I gave them some credit for being so considerate. They had even been generous enough to leave me my boots, which I parted with to the landlord for a third of their cost. At last I sallied out of the ready-furnished lodging, unencumbered, heaven be praised, with baggage or attendance. The first thing I did was to go and see if my mules were still at the inn where we alighted the evening before. It was not to be supposed that Ambrose would have neglected a due attention to them; and it would have

been well for me if I had always taken such exact measure of his character I learned that he had not waited for the morning, but had been careful to fetch them by over-night. Under these circumstances, satisfied I should never see them again, any more than my portmanteau, I walked sulkily along the streets, musing on the future plans I should adopt. I was tempted to go back to Burgos, and once more have recourse to Donna Mencia; but, regarding this as an abuse of that lady's goodness, and being aware, moreover, what a fool I should look like, I thought it best to forego that idea. I made a vow too for the future to be on my guard against women. I could have sent the chaste Susanna to the house of correction. From time to time my ring caught my eye, it was a present from Camilla! and I was ready to burst with anguish. Alas! thought I, I am no judge of jewellery, but I shall be, by experience of these hucksters who exchange without a robbery. I need not go to a jeweller to be told I am an ass! I can see my own face in my ruby.

Yet I did not neglect to know the truth respecting the value of my ring, and showed it to a lapidary, who rated it at three ducats. At such an estimate, though as much as I expected, I made a formal surrender to the devil, of the Philippine isles, the governor and his niece; or rather, I only restored his own subjects to their lawful sovereign. As I was going out of the lapidary's shop a young fellow brushed by me, and on looking round, made a full stop. I could not recollect his name at first, though his features were perfectly familiar to me. How now, Gil Blas, said he, are you ashamed of an old acquaintance? or have two years so altered the son of Nunez the barber, that you do not know him? Do not you recollect Fabricio, your townsman and schoolfellow? How often have we kept, before Doctor Godinez, upon universals and metaphysics!

These words did not flow so fast as my recollection, and we embraced with mutual goodwill. Well, my friend, resumed he, I am overjoyed to meet with you. Words fall short. . . . But how is this? Why, you look like—as heaven is my judge, you are dressed like a grandee! A gentleman's sword, silk stockings, a velvet doublet and cloak, embroidered with silver! Plague take it! this is getting on in the world with a vengeance. I will lay a wager you are in with some old monied harridan. You reckon without

your host, said I, my affairs are not so prosperous as you imagine. That will not do for me, replied he, I know better things; but you have a mind to be close. And that fine ruby on your finger, master Gil Blas, whence comes that, if I may be so bold? It comes, quoth I, from an infernal jade. Fabricio, my dear Fabricio, far from being point, quint, and quatorze with the ladies of Valladolid, you are to know, my friend, that I am their complete bubble.

I uttered these last words so ruefully, that Fabricio saw plainly that some trick had been played upon me. He was anxious to learn why I was out of humour with the lovely sex. I had no difficulty in satisfying his curiosity; but as the story was a long one, and besides we had no mind to part in a hurry, we went into a coffee-house to be a little more at ease. There I recounted to him, during breakfast, all that had happened to me since my departure from Oviedo. My adventures he thought whimsical enough; and testifying his sympathy in my present uneasy circumstances, added —We must make the best, my good lad, of all our misfortunes in this life. Is a man of parts in distress? he waits patiently for better luck. Such an one, as Cicero truly observes, never suffers himself to be humbled so low, as to forget that he is a man. For my own part, that is just my character; in or out of favour there is no sinking me; I always float on the surface of ill-luck. For example, I was in love with a girl of some family at Oviedo, and was beloved by her in return. I asked her of her father in marriage, he refused. Many a young fellow would have died of grief; but no! mark my spirit, I carried off the little baggage. She was lively, heedless, and coquettish: pleasure consequently was always uppermost to the prejudice of duty. I took her with me for six months backwards and forwards about Galicia; thence, adopting my taste for travelling, she had a mind to go to Portugal, but in other company—more food for despair. Yet I did not give in under the weight of this new affliction; but, improving on Menelaus, thought myself much obliged to the Paris who had whispered in the ear of my Helen, for ridding me of a bad bargain; I therefore determined to keep the peace. After that, not finding it convenient to return to the Asturias and balance accounts with justice, I went forward into the kingdom of Leon, spending between one town and another all the loose cash remaining

from the rape of my Indian princess; for we had both of us birdlimed our fingers at our departure from Oviedo. I got to Palencia with a solitary ducat, out of which I was obliged to buy a pair of shoes. The remainder would not go far. My situation became rather perplexing. I began already to be reduced to short allowance; something must be done. I resolved to go out to service. My first place was with a woollen-draper in a large way, whose son was a lad of wit and fashion; here was a complete antidote to fasting, but then there was a little awkwardness. The father ordered me to dog the son, the son begged my assistance in imposing on the father; it was necessary to take one side or other. Entreaties sound more musical than commands, and my taste for music got me turned out of doors. The next service I entered into was with an old painter, who undertook, as a matter of favour, to teach me the principles of his art; but he was so busy in feeding me with knowledge, that he forgot to give me any meat. This neglect of substance for shadow disgusted me with my abode at Palencia. I came to Valladolid, where, by the greatest good luck in the world, I was hired by a governor of the hospital; I am with him still, and delighted with my quarters. My master, Signor Manuel Ordonnez, is a man of profound piety. He always walks with his eyes cast downwards, and a large rosary in his hand. They say that from his early youth, having been a close inspector of the poor, he has interested himself in their affairs with unwearied zeal. Charity draws down a blessing on the charitable, everything has prospered with him. What a favourite of heaven! The more he does for the poor, the richer he grows.

As Fabricio was going on in this manner, I interrupted him. It is well you are satisfied with your lot; but, between ourselves, surely you might play your part better in the world. Do not you believe it, Gil Blas, replied he; be assured that for a man of my temper a more agreeable situation could not possibly have been devised. The trade of a lacquey is toilsome, to be sure, for a poor creature; but for a lad of spirit it is all enchantment. A superior genius, when he gets a service, does not go about it like a lumpish simpleton. He enters into a family as viceroy over the master, not as an inferior minister. He begins by measuring the length of his employer's foot; by lending himself to

his weaknesses, he gains his confidence, and ends with leading him by the nose. Such has been my plan of operation at the governor's. I knew the pilgrim at once by his staff; his wish was for an earthly canonization. I pretended to believe him to be the saint he wished to be taken for, hypocrisy costs nothing. Nay, I went further, for I took pattern by him; and playing the same part before him which he played before others, I out-cozened the cozener, and by degrees got to be *major domo*. I am in hopes some day or other, under his wing, to have the fingering of the poor's box. It may bring a blessing upon me as well as another; for I have caught the flame from him, and already feel deeply for the interests of charity.

These are fine hopes, my dear Fabricio, replied I; and I congratulate you upon them. For my part, I am determined on my first plan. I shall straightway convert my embroidered suit into a cassock, repair to Salamanca, and there, enlisting under the banner of the university, fulfil the sacred duties of a tutor. A fine scheme! exclaimed Fabricio, a pleasant conceit! What madness, at your age, to turn pedant! Are you aware, you stupid fellow, what you take upon yourself by that choice? As soon as you are settled, all the house will be upon the watch, your most trivial actions will be minutely sifted. You will lead a life of incessant constraint; you must set yourself off with a counterfeit outside, and affect to entertain a double set of the cardinal virtues in your bosom. You will not have a moment to bestow on pleasure. The everlasting censor of your pupil, your days will pass in teaching grammar and administering saintly reprehension, when he shall say or do anything against decorum. After so much labour and confinement, what will be your reward? If the little gentleman is a pickle, they will lay all the blame on your bad management; and you will be kicked out of the family, it may be without your stipend. Do not tell me then of a tutor's employment; it is worse than a cure of souls. But talk as much as you will about a lacquey's occupation, that is a sinecure, and pledges you to nothing. Suppose one's master not to be immaculate? A servant of superior genius will flatter his vices, and not unfrequently turn them to account. A footman lives at his ease in a good family. After having ate and drank his fill, he goes

to bed peaceably, without troubling himself who pays the bills.

I should never have done, my dear fellow, pursued he, were I to enumerate all the advantages of service. Trust me, Gil Blas, discard for ever your foolish wish of being a tutor, and follow my example. So be it: but, Fabricio, replied I, governors like yours are not to be met with every day; and if resolved to go to service, I should like at least to get a good situation. Oh! you are in the right, said he, and that shall be my concern. I will get you a comfortable place, if it were only to snatch a fine fellow from the jaws of the university.

The near approach of poverty with which I was threatened, and Fabricio's apparent good case, having more weight with me than his arguments, I determined to wear a livery. On which we sallied forth from the tavern, and my townsman said: I am going to introduce you to a man, to whom most of the servants resort when they are on the ramble; he has eaves-droppers about him to pick up all that passes in families. He knows at once where the servants are going away, and keeps a correct register, not only of vacant places, but of vacant masters, with their good and bad properties. The fellow has been a friar in some convent or other. In short, he it was who got me my place.

While we were conversing about so singular an office of intelligence, the son of Nunez the barber took me into a street which had no thoroughfare. We went into a mean house, where we found a man about fifty writing at a table. We wished him good day, with quite as much humility as became us: but, whether it was from natural pride, or that, from a habit of seeing none but lacqueys and coachmen, he had got a trick of receiving his company with an easy freedom, without rising from his seat, he just gave a slight nod. He seemed surprised that a young man in embroidered velvet should want a place; he had rather expected me to have wanted a servant. However, he was not kept long in doubt, since Fabricio said at once: Signor Arias de Londona, give me leave to introduce one of my best friends. He is a youth of good connections, whom adverse circumstances have reduced to the necessity of going to service. Have the goodness to provide for him handsomely, and you may trust to his gratitude. Gentlemen, replied Arias coolly, this is the

way with you all; before you are settled, you make the finest promises in the world: but afterwards, Lord help us! your memories are very short. The deuce! replied Fabricio, why you do not complain of me? Have not I done the thing genteelly? You ought to have done it much better, rejoined Arias: your place is better than a clerk in a public office, and you paid me as if I had quartered you upon a poor author. Here I interfered, and told Master Arias, that to convince him I was not a shabby fellow, I would make my acknowledgements beforehand; at the same time taking out two ducats, with an assurance of not stopping there if he got me into a good berth.

He seemed to like my mode of dealing. There are, said he, some very good places vacant. I will give you a list of them, and you shall take your choice. With these words, he put on his spectacles, opened a register on the table, turned over a few of the leaves, and began reading to this effect: Captain Torbellino wants a footman; a hasty, hair-brained, humoursome chap; scolds incessantly, swears, kicks his servants, and very often cripples them. Go on to the next, cried I, at this picture; such a captain will never do for me. My sprightliness made Arias smile, and he went on with his catalogue thus: Donna Menuela de Sandoval, a superannuated dowager, peevish and fantastical, is in want at this very time; she keeps but one, and him never for four-and-twenty hours. There has been a livery in the house for these ten years, which fits every new-comer, whether tall or short. They only just try it on; so that it is as good as new, though it has had two thousand owners. Doctor Alvar Fanez wants a journeyman; an eminent member of the faculty! He boards his family very handsomely, has everything comfortable about him, and gives very high wages; but he is a little too fond of experiments. When he gets a parcel of bad drugs, which happens very often, there is a pretty quick succession of new servants.

Oh! I do not in the least doubt it, interrupted Fabricio with a horse-laugh. Upon my word, you give me a fine character of your customers. Patience, said Arias de Londona; we have not yet got to the end: there is variety enough. Thereupon he continued to read on: Donna Alfonsa de Solis, an old devotee, who lives two-thirds of her time at church, and always keeps her servant at her apron

string, has been in want for these three weeks. The Licentiate Sédillo, an old prebendary of the chapter here, turned away his servant yesterday evening. . . . Halt there, Signor Arias de Londona, cried Fabricio at that passage; we will stick to the church. The Licentiate Sédillo is one of my master's friends, and I am very well acquainted with him. I know he has for his housekeeper an old hypocrite, called Dame Jacintha, who is complete mistress of the family. It is one of the best houses in Valladolid. A very idle life, and plenty of excellent meat and drink. Besides, his reverence is an old, gouty, infirm man, likely soon to make his will: there is a legacy to be looked after. That is a delightful prospect for one of our cloth! Gil Blas, added he, turning round to me, let us lose no time, my friend, but go immediately to the licentiate's house. I will introduce you myself, and give you a character. At these words, for fear of missing such an opportunity, we took a hasty leave of Signor Arias, who assured me, for my money, that if I failed here, he would do something as good for me elsewhere.

BOOK THE SECOND

CHAPTER I

FABRICIO INTRODUCES GIL BLAS TO THE LICENTIATE SEDILLO, AND PROCURES HIM A RECEPTION. THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY OF THAT CLERGYMAN. PICTURE OF HIS HOUSEKEEPER

We were so dreadfully afraid of offending against the regular hours of the old licentiate, that we made but a hop, skip, and jump, from the street with one outlet, to the prebendal residence. The gates were barred: but we ventured to announce our arrival. A girl of ten years old, the housekeeper's professed niece, and slander could not gainsay the relationship, opened the door to us. As we asked to speak with his reverence, Dame Jacintha made her appearance. She was a lady of ripe person and parts, but by no means past her prime; and I was particularly attracted by the clearness of her complexion. She wore a long

woollen gown of the most ordinary quality, with a large leathern girdle, whence hung suspended a bunch of keys on one side, and on the other a tremendous string of beads. As soon as we got a glimpse of her, we made our obeisances with all possible reverence. She returned our salutation with similar good breeding, but with an air of modesty, and eyes communing with the ground.

I have been told, said my fellow servant, that the reverend the Licentiate Sédillo wants an honest lad, and I have one at his service with whom he will be well satisfied. The superintendent of the household turned up her eyes at these words with a significant side glance at me; and, finding it difficult to reconcile my laced jacket with Fabricio's exordium, asked if it was this fine gentleman who was come after the place. Yes, said the son of Nunez, it is this interesting and engaging youth. Just as you see him, the ups and downs of this transitory life have compelled him to wear an epaulette: but fate will have made him ample amends, added he with an affected languish, if he is so happy as to be an inmate here, and to profit by the society of the virtuous Jacintha. The patriarch of the Indies might have sighed for the virtuous Jacintha at the head of his establishment. At these words, this withered branch of piety withdrew her penetrating regards from me, to contemplate this courteous spokesman. Struck with certain lines which were not new to her, in his face, I have some floating idea of having seen you before, said she; but my memory wants a lift. Holy Jacintha, replied Fabricio, it is enough for me to have been blessed with your pious notice. Twice have I been under this venerable roof with my master, Signor Manuel Ordonnez, governor of the hospital. Ah! just so, answered the lady chamberlain, I recollect! You are an old acquaintance. Well-a-day now! Your very belonging to Signor Ordonnez is enough to prove you a youth of merit and strict propriety. A servant is known by his place, and this lad could not have had a better sponsor. Come along with me; I will introduce you to Signor Sédillo. I am sure he will be glad to engage a lad at your recommendation.

We followed Dame Jacintha. The canon lived in the lower part of the house, in a comfortable suite of wainscotted apartments. She begged us to wait a moment in the

ante-chamber, while she went into the licentiate's room. After some private parley with him, merely that he might know what he was about, she came to tell us we might walk in. We kenned the old cripple, immersed in an elbow chair, with a pillow under his head, cushions under his arms, and his legs supported on a large stool, stuffed with down. We were no niggards of our bows as we advanced; and Fabricio, still taking the lead, not only repeated over again what he had said to the housekeeper, but set about extolling my merit, and expatiated in an especial manner on the honours I had gained in the schools under Doctor Godinez on all metaphysical questions: as if it was necessary for a prebendary's footman to be as learned as his master. However that might be, it served as a tub to the whale. Besides, Dame Jacintha did not look forbidding, and my surety received the following answer: Friend, I receive into my service the lad you recommend. I like him well enough; and as for his morals, they cannot be much amiss, since he presents himself under the wing of a domestic belonging to Signor Ordonnez.

As soon as Fabricio saw me safe landed, he made a low bow to the prebendary, a still lower to the lady, and withdrew in high good humour, whispering in my ear that we should meet again, and that I had only to make good my footing. As soon as he had left the room, the licentiate inquired my name, why I had left my native place; and drew me on by his questions to relate my adventures before Dame Jacintha. They were both highly amused, above all by my last rencounter. Camilla and Don Raphael gave such play to their risible muscles, that I thought old chalkstone would have burst: for, as he laughed with all his might, so violent a cough laid hold of him, as went very near to have carried him off. His will was not made. What an alarm for the housekeeper! Trembling, distracted, off she flew to the good man's succour, and just like a nurse with a puking child, paddled about his forehead and tapped him on the back. Luckily it was a false alarm; the old gentleman left off coughing, and the housekeeper tormenting him. When it was over, I was for going on with my narrative; but Dame Jacintha, in awe of a second fit, set herself against it. She therefore took me with her out of the room to a wardrobe, where, among several suits, was that of my pre-

decessor. This I was to take, and leave my own in its room, which I was not sorry to see laid up safe, in the hope it might be of further use. After this, we went together to get dinner ready.

I knew what I was about in the art of dressing meat. Dame Leonarda, with whom I had served my time, might have passed for a very decent plain cook; but a mere turnspit to Dame Jacintha. The latter might almost have borne away the bell from the archbishop of Toledo's man. She was mistress of everything; gravy soups, of the most delicious texture and relish; and, for made dishes, she could season them up or soften them down to the most delicate or voluptuous palate. At dinner-time we returned to his reverence's apartment. While I was arranging the grand concern close by his arm-chair, the lady of all work crammed a napkin under the old boy's chin, and pinned it behind his back. Without losing a moment, in marched I with a stew, fit to be set before the first gourmand in Madrid, and two courses, to have tickled the gills of a viceroy, only that Dame Jacintha had touched the spice-box with discretion, for fear of exasperating the gout. At the first glimpse of this goodly mess, my old master, whom I conceived to have lost the use of his limbs, made me to understand that his arms were exempted from the interdict. He availed himself of their assistance, to get clear of his pillow and cushions, and proceeded gaily to the attack. His hand shook, to be sure; but somehow or other it contrived to do its duty. He sent it backwards and forwards fast enough; though it brought but half its cargo to the landing-place at a lading: the tablecloth and napkin took toll. I carried off the soup when he had done, and brought in a partridge flanked by two roast quails, which Dame Jacintha cut up for him. She took care to make him take a good draught of wine, a little lowered at proper intervals, out of a large, deep, silver cup, which she held to his mouth, as if he had been an infant. He winged the partridge, and came down slap-dash upon all the rest of the dishes. When he had done cramming, that saint of the saucepan unpinned his napkin, reinstated his pillow and cushions; then, leaving him composed in his arm-chair to the enjoyment of his usual nap after dinner, we took away, and demolished the remainder with appetites worthy of our master.

The dinner of to-day was the ordinary bill of fare. Our canon played the best knife and fork in the chapter. But the supper was a mere bauble; seldom more than a chicken and a little confectionary. I larded my inside in this house, and led a good easy life. There was but one awkward circumstance; and that was sitting up with my master, to save the expense of a nurse. Besides a strangury, which kept him on the fidget ten times in an hour, he was very much given to perspire; and in that event, I shifted him. Gil Blas, said he, on the second night, you are an active, clever fellow; I foresee that we shall jog on very well together. I only just give you a hint to keep in with Dame Jacintha; the girl has been about me for these fifteen years, and manages all my little matters; she comforts my outward man, and I cannot do too much for her. For that reason, you are to know, that she is more to me than all my family. There is my nephew, my own sister's son; why, I have turned him out of doors, only to please her. He had no regard for the poor lass: and so far from giving her credit for all her little assiduities, the saucy rascal swore she did not care a farthing for me! But now-a-days, young people think virtue and gratitude all a farce. Heaven be praised, I am rid of the varlet. What claim has blood, in comparison with unquestionable attachment? I am influenced by a give-and-take principle in my connections. You are right, sir, replied I; gratitude ought to be the first thing, and natural affection the last. Ay! resumed he; and my will shall be a comment on that text. My housekeeper shall be residuary legatee; and you shall have a corner in a codicil, if you go on as well as you have begun. The footman I turned off yesterday has lost a good legacy, by not knowing where to hit the right nail on the head. If the blockhead had not obliged me, by his ill-behaviour, to send him packing, I would have made a man of him: but the beggar on horseback gave himself airs to Dame Jacintha! Then master lazy-bones did not like sitting up! I might pass the night as I could, provided he had no trouble with me. Oh! the unfeeling scoundrel! exclaimed I, in the true spirit of Fabricio, he was not a man to be about so good a master. The lad for your money should be a humble, but confidential friend; he should not make a toil of what ought to be a pleasure, but think nothing of going through fire and water for your ease.

These professions were not lost upon the licentiate. Neither were my assurances of due submission to Dame Jacintha's authority less acceptable. Puffing myself off for a servant, who was not afraid of work, I got through my business as cheerfully as I could. I never complained of my nursery. Though to be sure it was irksome enough; and if the legacy had not settled my stomach, I should have sickened at the nature of my employment. It is true I got some hours' rest during the day. The housekeeper, to do her justice, was kind enough to me; owing to the insinuating manner in which I wormed myself into her good graces. Suppose me at table, with her and her niece Inésilla! I changed their plates, filled their glasses, never thought of my own dinner before they had everything they wanted. This was the way to thrive in their esteem. One day when Dame Jacintha was gone to market, finding myself alone with Inésilla, I began to make myself agreeable. Were her father and mother alive? Oh! no, answered she; they have been dead this long, long time; for my good aunt says they have, and I have never seen them. I religiously believed the little innocent, though her answer was not of the clearest; and she got into such an humour of talking, as to tell me more than I wanted to know. She informed me, or rather I inferred it from her artless simplicity, that her good aunt had a good friend, who lived likewise with an old canon. The temporalities of the church were under his administration; and these lucky domestics reckoned upon entwining the spoils of their masters round the pillars of the hymeneal temple, into whose sanctuary they had penetrated by anticipation. Dame Jacintha, as I have said before, though a little stricken in years, had still some bloom. To be sure, she spared no pains to cherish it: besides daily evacuations, she took plentiful doses of all-powerful jelly. She got her sleep in the night too, while I sat up with my master. But what perhaps contributed most to the freshness of this everlasting flower, was an issue in each leg, of which I should never have known, but for that blab Inésilla.

CHAPTER II

THE CANON'S ILLNESS; HIS TREATMENT; THE CONSEQUENCE; THE LEGACY TO GIL BLAS

I STAYED three months with the Licentiate Sédillo, without complaining of bad nights. At the end of that time he fell sick. The distemper was a fever; and it inflamed the gout. For the first time in his life, which had been long, he called in a physician. Doctor Sangrado was sent for; the Hippocrates of Valladolid. Dame Jacintha was for sending for the lawyer first, and touched that string; but the patient thought it was time enough, and had a little will of his own upon some points. Away I went therefore for Doctor Sangrado; and brought him with me. A tall, withered, wan executioner of the sisters three, who had done all their justice for at least these forty years! This learned forerunner of the undertaker had an aspect suited to his office: his words were weighed to a scruple; and his jargon sounded grand in the ears of the uninitiated. His arguments were mathematical demonstrations: and his opinions had the merit of originality.

After studying my master's symptoms, he began with medical solemnity: The question here is, to remedy an obstructed perspiration. Ordinary practitioners, in this case, would follow the old routine of salines, diuretics, volatile salts, sulphur and mercury; but purges and sudorifics are a deadly practice! Chemical preparations are edged tools in the hands of the ignorant. My methods are more simple, and more efficacious. What is your usual diet? I live pretty much upon soups, replied the canon, and eat my meat with a good deal of gravy. Soups and gravy! exclaimed the petrified doctor. Upon my word, it is no wonder you are ill. High living is a poisoned bait; a trap set by sensuality, to cut short the days of wretched man. We must have done with pampering our appetites: the more insipid, the more wholesome. The human blood is not a gravy! Why then you must give it such a nourishment as will assimilate with the particles of which it is composed. You drink wine, I warrant you? Yes, said the licentiate, but diluted. Oh! finely diluted, I dare say, rejoined the

physician. This is licentiousness with a vengeance! A frightful course of feeding! Why, you ought to have died years ago. How old are you? I am in my sixty-ninth year, replied the canon. So I thought, quoth the practitioner, a premature old age is always the consequence of intemperance. If you had only drank clear water all your life, and had been contented with plain food, boiled apples for instance, you would not have been a martyr to the gout, and your limbs would have performed their functions with lubricity. But I do not despair of setting you on your legs again, provided you give yourself up to my management. The licentiate promised to be upon his good behaviour.

Sangrado then sent me for a surgeon of his own choosing, and took from him six good porringers of blood, by way of a beginning, to remedy this obstinate obstruction. He then said to the surgeon; Master Martin Onez, you will take as much more three hours hence, and to-morrow you will repeat the operation. It is a mere vulgar error, that the blood is of any use in the system; the faster you draw it off the better. A patient has nothing to do but to keep himself quiet; with him, to live is merely not to die; he has no more occasion for blood than a man in a trance; in both cases, life consists exclusively in pulsation and respiration.

When the doctor had ordered these frequent and copious bleedings, he added a drench of warm water at very short intervals, maintaining that water in sufficient quantities was the grand secret in the materia medica. He then took his leave, telling Dame Jacintha and me, with an air of confidence, that he would answer for the patient's life, if his system was fairly pursued. The housekeeper, though protesting secretly against this new practice, bowed to his superior authority. In fact, we set on the kettles in a hurry; and, as the physician had desired us above all things to give him enough, we began with pouring down two or three pints at as many gulps. An hour after we beset him again; then, returning to the attack time after time, we fairly poured a deluge into his poor stomach. The surgeon, on the other hand, taking out the blood as we put in the water, we reduced the old canon to death's door in less than two days.

This venerable ecclesiastic, able to hold it out no longer, as I pledged him in a large glass of his new cordial, said to

me in a faint voice—Hold, Gil Blas, do not give me any more, my friend. It is plain death will come when he will come, in spite of water; and, though I have hardly a drop of blood in my veins, I am no better for getting rid of the enemy. The ablest physician in the world can do nothing for us, when our time is expired. Fetch a notary; I will make my will. At these last words, pleasing enough to my fancy, I affected to appear unhappy; and concealing my impatience to be gone: Sir, said I, you are not reduced so low, thank God, but you may yet recover. No, no, interrupted he, my good fellow, it is all over. I feel the gout shifting, and the hand of death is upon me. Make haste, and go where I told you. I saw, sure enough, that he changed every moment: and the case was so urgent, that I ran as fast as I could, leaving him in Dame Jacintha's care, who was more afraid than myself of his dying without a will. I laid hold of the first notary I could find; Sir, said I, the Licentiate Sédillo, my master, is drawing near his end; he wants to settle his affairs; there is not a moment to be lost. The notary was a dapper little fellow, who loved his joke; and enquired who was our physician. At the name of Doctor Sangrado, hurrying on his cloak and hat: For mercy's sake! cried he, let us set off with all possible speed; for this doctor dispatches business so fast, that our fraternity cannot keep pace with him. That fellow spoils half my jobs.

With this sarcasm, he set forward in good earnest, and, as we pushed on, to get the start of the grim tyrant, I said to him: Sir, you are aware that a dying testator's memory is sometimes a little short; should my master chance to forget me, be so good as to put in a word in my favour. That I will, my lad, replied the little proctor; you may rely on it. I will urge something handsome, if I have an opportunity. The licentiate, on our arrival, had still all his faculties about him. Dame Jacintha was by his bedside, laying in her tears by wholesale. She had played her game, and bespoken a handsome remembrance. We left the notary alone with my master, and went together into the ante-chamber, where we met the surgeon, sent by the physician for another and a last experiment. We laid hold of him. Stop, Master Martin, said the housekeeper, you cannot go into Signor Sédillo's room just now. He is giving his last orders; but you may bleed away when the will is made.

We were terribly afraid, this pious gentlewoman and I, lest the licentiate should go off with his will half finished; but by good luck, the important deed was executed. We saw the proctor come out, who, finding me on the watch, slapped me on the shoulder, and said with a simper: Gil Blas is not forgotten. At these words, I felt the most lively joy; and was so well pleased with my master for his kind notice, that I promised myself the pleasure of praying for his soul after death, which event happened anon; for the surgeon having bled him once more, the poor old man, quite exhausted, gave up the ghost under the lancet. Just as he was breathing his last, the physician made his appearance, and looked a little foolish, notwithstanding the universality of his death-bed experience. Yet far from imputing the accident to the new practice, he walked off, affirming with intrepidity, that it was owing to their having been too lenient with the lancet, and too chary of their warm water. The medical executioner, I mean the surgeon, seeing that his functions also were at an end, followed Doctor Sangrado.

As soon as we saw the breath out of our patron's body, Dame Jacintha, Inésilla, and myself, joined in a decent chorus of funeral lamentation, loud enough to produce a proper effect in the neighbourhood. The emblem of a life to come, though she had more reason than any of us to rejoice, took the soprano part, and screamed out her afflictions in a most pathetic manner. The room in an instant was crowded with people, attracted less by compassion than curiosity. The relations of the deceased no sooner got wind of his departure than they pounced down upon the premises, and sealed up everything. From the housekeeper's distress, they thought there was no will; but they soon found their mistake, and that there was one without a flaw. When it was opened, and they learned the disposition of the testator's principal property, in favour of Dame Jacintha and the little girl, they pronounced his funeral oration in terms not a little disparaging to his memory. They gave a broad apostrophe at the same time to the godly legatee, and a few blessings to me in my turn. It must be owned I had earned them. The licentiate, heaven reward him for it, to secure my remembrances through life, expressed himself thus in a paragraph of his will—*Item, as Gil Blas has already some*

little smattering of literature, to encourage his studious habits, I give and bequeath to him my library, all my books and my manuscripts, without any drawback or exception.

I could not conceive where this said library might be; I had never seen any. I only knew of some papers, with five or six bound books, on two little deal shelves in my master's closet; and that was my legacy. The books, too, could be of no great use to me; the title of one was, The complete Man Cook; another, A Treatise on Indigestion, with the Methods of Cure; the rest were the four parts of the breviary, half eaten up by the worms. In the article of manuscripts, the most curious consisted of documents relating to a lawsuit in which the prebendary was once engaged for his stall. After having examined my legacy with more minuteness than it deserved, I made over my right and title to these invidious relations. I even renounced my livery, and took back my own suit, claiming my wages as my only reward. I then went to look out for another place. As for Dame Jacintha, besides her residue under the will, she had some snug little articles, which, by the help of her good friend, she had appropriated to her own use during the last illness of the licentiate.

CHAPTER III

GIL BLAS ENTERS INTO DOCTOR SANGRADO'S SERVICE, AND BECOMES A FAMOUS PRACTITIONER

I DETERMINED to throw myself in the way of Signor Arias de Londona, and to look out for a new berth in his register; but as I was on my way to No Thoroughfare, who should come across me but Doctor Sangrado, whom I had not seen since the day of my master's death. I took the liberty of touching my hat. He kenned me in a twinkling, though I had changed my dress; and with as much warmth as his temperament would allow him; Hey day! said he, the very lad I wanted to see; you have never been out of my thought. I have occasion for a clever fellow about me, and pitched upon you as the very thing, if you can read and write. Sir, replied I, if that is all you require, I am your man. In that case, rejoined he, we need look no further. Come home with me; it will be all comfort: I shall behave to

you like a brother. You will have no wages, but everything will be found you. You shall eat and drink according to the true faith, and be taught to cure all diseases. In a word, you shall rather be my young Sangrado than my footman.

I closed in with the doctor's proposal, in the hope of becoming an Esculapius under so inspired a master. He carried me home on the spur of the occasion, to instal me in my honourable employment; which honourable employment consisted in writing down the name and residence of the patients who sent for him in his absence. There had indeed been a register for this purpose, kept by an old domestic; but she had not the gift of spelling accurately, and wrote a most perplexing hand. This account I was to keep. It might truly be called a bill of mortality; for my members all went from bad to worse during the short time they continued in this system. I was a sort of book-keeper for the other world, to take places in the stage, and to see that the first come were the first served. My pen was always in my hand, for Doctor Sangrado had more practice than any physician of his time in Valladolid. He had got into reputation with the public by a certain professional slang, humoured by a medical face, and some extraordinary cases, more honoured by implicit faith than scrupulous investigation.

He was in no want of patients, nor consequently of property. He did not keep the best house in the world: we lived with some little attention to economy. The usual bill of fare consisted of peas, beans, boiled apples or cheese. He considered this food as best suited to the human stomach, that is to say, as most amenable to the grinders, whence it was to encounter the process of digestion. Nevertheless, easy as was their passage, he was not for stopping the way with too much of them: and, to be sure, he was in the right. But though he cautioned the maid and me against repletion in respect of solids, it was made up by free permission to drink as much water as we liked. Far from prescribing us any limits there, he would tell us sometimes—Drink, my children; health consists in the pliability and moisture of the parts. Drink water by pails full, it is a universal dissolvent; water liquefies all the salts. Is the course of the blood a little sluggish? this grand principle sets it forward: too rapid? its career is checked. Our doctor was so ortho-

dox on this head, that he drank nothing himself but water, though advanced in years. He defined old age to be a natural consumption which dries us up and wastes us away: on this principle, he deplored the ignorance of those who call wine old men's milk. He maintained that wine wears them out and corrodes them, and pleaded with all the force of eloquence against that liquor, fatal in common both to the young and old, that friend with a serpent in its bosom, that pleasure with a dagger under its girdle.

In spite of these fine arguments, at the end of a week a looseness ensued, with some twinges, which I was blasphemous enough to saddle on the universal dissolvent, and the new-fashioned diet. I stated my symptoms to my master, in the hope he would relax the rigour of his regimen, and qualify my meals with a little wine, but his hostility to that liquor was inflexible. If you have not philosophy enough, said he, for pure water, there are innocent infusions to strengthen the stomach against the nausea of aqueous quaffings. Sage, for example, has a very pretty flavour: and if you wish to heighten it into a debauch, it is only mixing rosemary, wild poppy, and other simples, but no compounds.

In vain did he crack off his water, and teach me the secret of composing delicious messes. I was so abstemious, that, remarking my moderation, he said—In good sooth, Gil Blas, I marvel not that you are no better than you are; you do not drink enough, my friend. Water taken in a small quantity serves only to separate the particles of bile and set them in action; but our practice is to drown them with a copious drench. Fear not, my good lad, lest a superabundance of liquid should either weaken or chill your stomach; far from thy better judgment be that silly fear of unadulterated drink. I will ensure you against all consequences; and if my authority will not serve your turn, read Celsus. That oracle of the ancients makes an admirable panegyric on water; in short, he says in plain terms that those who plead an inconstant stomach in favour of wine, publish a libel on their own bowels, and make their organization a pretence for their sensuality.

As it would have been ungenteel in me to have run riot on my entrance into the career of practice, I affected thorough conviction; indeed, I thought there was something in it. I

therefore went on drinking water on the authority of Celsus, or, to speak in scientific terms, I began to drown the bile in copious drenches of that unadulterated liquor; and though I felt myself more out of order from day to day, prejudice won the cause against experience. It is evident, therefore, that I was in the right road to the practice of physic. Yet I could not always be insensible to the qualms which increased in my frame, to that degree, as to determine me on quitting Doctor Sangrado. But he invested me with a new office which changed my tone. Hark you, my child, said he to me one day, I am not one of those hard and ungrateful masters, who leave their household to grow grey in service without a suitable reward. I am well pleased with you, I have a regard for you, and without waiting till you have served your time, I will make your fortune. Without more ado, I will initiate you in the healing art, of which I have for so many years been at the head. Other physicians make the science to consist of various unintelligible branches; but I will shorten the road for you, and dispense with the drudgery of studying natural philosophy, pharmacy, botany, and anatomy. Remember, my friend, that bleeding and drinking warm water are the two grand principles; the true secret of curing all the distempers incident to humanity. Yes, this marvellous secret which I reveal to you, and which nature, beyond the reach of my colleagues, has failed in rescuing from my pen, is comprehended in these two articles —namely, bleeding and drenching. Here you have the sum total of my philosophy; you are thoroughly bottomed in medicine, and may raise yourself to the summit of fame on the shoulders of my long experience. You may enter into partnership at once, by keeping the books in the morning, and going out to visit patients in the afternoon. While I dose the nobility and clergy, you shall labour in your vocation among the lower orders; and when you have felt your ground a little, I will get you admitted into our body. You are a philosopher, Gil Blas, though you have never graduated; the common herd of them, though they have graduated in due form and order, are likely to run out the length of their tether without knowing their right hand from their left.

I thanked the doctor for having so speedily enabled me to serve as his deputy; and, by way of acknowledging his good-

ness, promised to follow his system to the end of my career, with a magnanimous indifference about the aphorisms of Hippocrates. But that engagement was not to be taken to the letter. This tender attachment to water went against the grain, and I had a scheme for drinking wine every day snugly among the patients. I left off wearing my own suit a second time, to take up one of my master's, and look like an inveterate practitioner. After which I brought my medical theories into play, leaving them to look to the event whom it might concern. I began on an alguazil in a pleurisy; he was condemned to be bled with the utmost rigour of the law, at the same time that the system was to be replenished copiously with water. Next I made a lodgment in the veins of a gouty pastry-cook, who roared like a lion by reason of gouty spasms. I stood on no more ceremony with his blood than with that of the alguazil, and laid no restriction on his taste for simple liquids. My prescriptions brought me in twelve rials; an incident so auspicious in my professional career, that I only wished for the plagues of Egypt on all the hale subjects of Valladolid. As I was coming out of the pastrycook's whom should I meet but Fabricio, a total stranger since the death of the licentiate Sédillo! He looked at me with astonishment for some seconds; then set up a laugh with all his might, and held his sides. He had no reason to be grave, for I had a cloak trailing on the ground, with a doublet and breeches of four times my natural dimensions. I was certainly a complete original. I suffered him to make merry as long as he liked, and could scarcely help joining in the ridicule; but I kept a guard on my muscles to preserve a becoming dignity in public, and the better to enact the physician, whose part in society is not that of a buffoon. If the absurdity of my appearance excited Fabricio's merriment, my affected gravity added zest to it; and when he had nearly exhausted his lungs—By all the powers, Gil Blas, quoth he, thou art in complete masquerade. Who the devil has dressed you up in this manner? Fair and softly, my friend, replied I, fair and softly, be a little on your good behaviour with a modern Hippocrates. Understand me to be the substitute of Doctor Sangrado, the most eminent physician in Valladolid. I have lived with him these three weeks. He has bottomed me thoroughly in medicine; and as he cannot per-

form the obsequies of all the patients who send for him, I visit a part of them to take the burden off his conscience. He does execution in great families, I among the vulgar. Vastly well, replied Fabricio; that is to say, he grants you a lease on the blood of the commonalty, but keeps to himself the fee-simple of the fashionable world. I wish you joy of your lot; it is a pleasanter line of practice among the populace than among great folk. Long live a snug connection in the suburbs! a man's mistakes are easily buried, and his murders elude all but God's revenge. Yes, my brave boy, your destiny is truly enviable; in the language of Alexander, were I not Fabricio, I could wish to be Gil Blas.

To show the son of Nunez, the barber, that he was not much out in his reckoning on my present happiness, I chinked the fees of the alguazil and the pastrycook; and this was followed by an adjournment to a tavern, to drink to their perfect recovery. The wine was very fair, and my impatience for the well-known smack made me think it better than it was. I took some good long draughts, and without gainsaying the Latin oracle, in proportion as I poured it into its natural reservoir, I felt my accommodating entrails to owe me no grudge for the hard service into which I pressed them. As for Fabricio and myself, we sat for some time in the tavern, making merry at the expense of our masters, as servants are too much accustomed to do. At last, seeing the night approach, we parted, after engaging to meet at the same place on the following day after dinner.

CHAPTER IV

GIL BLAS GOES ON PRACTISING PHYSIC WITH EQUAL SUCCESS AND ABILITY. ADVENTURE OF THE RECOVERED RING

I was no sooner at home than Doctor Sangrado came in. I talked to him about the patients I had seen, and paid into his hands eight remaining rials of the twelve I had received for my prescriptions. Eight rials! said he, as he counted them, mighty little for two visits! But we must take things as we find them. In the spirit of taking things as he found them, he laid violent hands on six, giving me

the other two—Here, Gil Blas, continued he, see what a foundation to build upon. I make over to you the fourth of all you may bring me. You will soon feather your nest, my friend; for, by the blessing of Providence, there will be a great deal of ill health this year.

I had reason to be content with my dividend; since, having determined to keep back the third part of what I received in my rounds, and afterwards touching another fourth of the remainder, half of the whole, if arithmetic is anything more than a deception, would become my perquisite. This inspired me with new zeal for my profession. The next day, as soon as I had dined, I resumed my medical paraphernalia, and took the field once more. I visited several patients on the list, and treated their several complaints in one invariable routine. Hitherto things went on under the rose, and no individual, thank heaven, had risen up in rebellion against my prescriptions. But let a physician's cures be as extraordinary as they will, some quack or other is always ready to rip up his reputation. I was called in to a grocer's son in a dropsy. Whom should I find there before me but a little black-looking physician, by name Doctor Cuchillo, introduced by a relation of the family. I bowed round most profoundly, but dipped lowest to the personage whom I took to have been invited to a consultation with me. He returned my compliment with a distant air; then, having stared me in the face for a few seconds—Signor Doctor, said he, I beg pardon for being inquisitive, I thought I had been acquainted with all my brethren in Valladolid, but I confess your physiognomy is altogether new. You must have been settled but a short time in town. I avowed myself a young practitioner, acting as yet under the direction of Doctor Sangrado. I wish you joy, replied he politely, you are studying under a great man. You must doubtless have seen a vast deal of sound practice, young as you appear to be. He spoke this with so easy an assurance, that I was at a loss whether he meant it seriously, or was laughing at me. While I was conning over my reply, the grocer, seizing on the opportunity, said—Gentlemen, I am persuaded of your both being perfectly competent in your art; have the goodness without ado to take the case in hand, and devise some effectual means for the restoration of my son's health.

Thereupon the little pulse-counter set himself about reviewing the patient's situation; and after having dilated to me on all the symptoms, asked me what I thought the fittest method of treatment. I am of opinion, replied I, that he should be bled once a day, and drink as much warm water as he can swallow. At these words, our diminutive doctor said to me with a malicious simper—And so you think such a course will save the patient? Never doubt it, exclaimed I, in a confident tone; it must produce that effect, because it is a certain method of cure for all distempers. Ask Signor Sangrado. At that rate, retorted he, Celsus is altogether in the wrong; for he contends that the readiest way to cure a dropsical subject is to let him almost die of hunger and thirst. Oh! as for Celsus, interrupted I, he is no oracle of mine, as fallible as the meanest of us; I often have occasion to bless myself for going contrary to his dogmas. I discover by your language, said Cuchillo, the safe and sure method of practice Doctor Sangrado instils into his pupils. Bleeding and drenching are the extent of his resources. No wonder so many worthy people are cut off under his direction. . . . No defamation! interrupted I with some acrimony; a member of the faculty had better not begin throwing stones. Come, come, my learned doctor, patients can get to the other world without bleeding and warm water; and I question whether the most deadly of us has ever signed more passports than yourself. If you have any crow to pluck with Signor Sangrado, write against him, he will answer you, and we shall soon see who will have the best of the battle. By all the saints in the calendar! swore he, in a transport of passion, you little know whom you are talking to. I have a tongue and a fist, my friend; and am not afraid of Sangrado, who, with all his arrogance and affectation, is but a ninny. The size of the little death dealer made me hold his anger cheap. I gave him a sharp retort; he sent back as good as I brought, till at last we came to cuffs. We had pulled a few handfuls of hair from each other's heads before the grocer and his kinsman could part us. When they had brought this about, they feed me for my attendance, and retained my antagonist, whom they thought the more skilful of the two.

Another adventure succeeded close on the heels of this. I went to see a huge chanter in a fever. As soon as he heard

me talk of warm water, he showed himself so averse to this specific, as to fall into a fit of swearing. He abused me in all possible shapes, and threatened to throw me out at window. I was in a greater hurry to get out of his house than to get in. I did not choose to see any more patients that day, and repaired to the inn where I had agreed to meet Fabricio. He was there first. As we found ourselves in a tippling humour, we drank hard, and returned to our employers in a pretty pickle, that is to say, so-so in the upper story. Signor Sangrado was not aware of my being drunk, because he took the lively gestures which accompanied the relation of my quarrel with the little doctor, for an effect of the agitation not yet subsided after the battle. Besides, he came in for his share in my report; and feeling himself nettled by Cuchillo—You have done well, Gil Blas, said he, to defend the character of our practice against this little abortion of the faculty. So he takes upon him to set his face against watery drenches in dropsical cases? An ignorant fellow! I maintain, I do, in my own person, that the use of them may be reconciled to the best theories. Yes water is a cure for all sorts of dropsies, just as it is good for rheumatisms and the green sickness. It is excellent, too, in those fevers where the effect is at once to parch and to chill, and even miraculous in those disorders ascribed to cold, thin, phlegmatic, and pituitous humours. This opinion may seem strange to young practitioners like Cuchillo; but it is right orthodox in the best and soundest systems: so that if persons of that description were capable of taking a philosophical view, instead of crying me down, they would become my most zealous advocates.

In his rage, he never suspected me of drinking: for, to exasperate him still more against the little doctor, I had thrown into my recital some circumstances of my own addition. Yet, engrossed as he was by what I had told him, he could not help taking notice that I drank more water than usual that evening.

In fact, the wine had made me very thirsty. Any one but Sangrado would have distrusted my being so very dry, as to swallow down glass after glass: but as for him, he took it for granted, in the simplicity of his heart, that I began to acquire a relish for aqueous potations. Apparently, Gil Blas, said he with a gracious smile, you have no longer such

a dislike to water. As heaven is my judge! you quaff it off like nectar. It is no wonder, my friend, I was certain you would take a liking to that liquor. Sir, replied I, there is a tide in the affairs of men: with my present lights, I would give all the wine in Valladolid for a pint of water. This answer delighted the doctor, who would not lose so fine an opportunity of expatiating on the excellence of water. He undertook to ring the changes once more in its praise, not like a hireling pleader, but as an enthusiast in the cause. A thousand times, exclaimed he, a thousand and a thousand times of greater value, as being more innocent than our modern taverns, were those baths of ages past, whither the people went not shamefully to squander their fortunes and expose their lives, by swilling themselves with wine, but assembled there for the decent and economical amusement of drinking warm water. It is difficult enough to admire the patriotic forecast of those ancient politicians, who established places of public resort, where water was dealt out gratis to all comers, and who confined wine to the shops of the apothecaries, that its use might be prohibited but under the direction of physicians. What a stroke of wisdom. It is doubtless to preserve the seeds of that antique frugality, emblematic of the golden age, that persons are found to this day, like you and me, who drink nothing but water, and are persuaded they possess a prevention or a cure for every ailment, provided our warm water has never boiled; for I have observed that water, when it has boiled, is heavier, and sits less easily on the stomach.

While he was holding forth thus eloquently, I was in danger more than once of splitting my sides with laughing. But I contrived to keep my countenance: nay, more; to chime in with the doctor's theory. I found fault with the use of wine, and pitied mankind for having contracted an untoward relish to so pernicious a beverage. Then, finding my thirst not sufficiently allayed, I filled a large goblet with water, and after having swilled it like a horse: Come, sir, said I to my master, let us drink plentifully of this beneficial liquor. Let us make those early establishments of dilution you so much regret, to live again in your house. He clapped his hands in ecstacy at these words, and preached to me for a whole hour about suffering no liquid but water to pass my lips. To confirm the habit, I promised to drink a large

quantity every evening; and, to keep my word with less violence to my private inclinations, I went to bed with a determined purpose of going to the tavern every day.

The trouble I had got into at the grocer's did not discourage me from phlebotomizing and prescribing warm water in the usual course. Coming out of a house where I had been visiting a poet in a phrenzy, I was accosted in the street by an old woman who came up and asked me if I was a physician. I said yes. As that is the case, replied she, I entreat you with all humility to go along with me. My niece has been ill since yesterday, and I cannot conceive what is the matter with her. I followed the old lady to her house, where I was shown into a very decent room, occupied by a female who kept her bed. I went near, to consider her case. Her features struck me from the first; and I discovered beyond the possibility of a mistake, after having looked at her some little time, the she-adventurer who had played the part of Camilla so adroitly. For her part, she did not seem to recollect me at all, whether from the oppression of her disorder, or from my dress as a physician rendering me not easy to be known again. I took her by the hand, to feel her pulse; and saw my ring upon her finger. I was all in a twitter at the discovery of a valuable, on which I had a claim both in law and equity. Great was my longing to make a snatch at it; but considering that these fair ones would set up a great scream, and that Don Raphael or some other defender of injured innocence might rush in to their rescue, I laid an embargo on my privateering. I thought it best to come by my own in an honest way, and to consult Fabricio about the means. To this last course I stuck. In the meantime the old woman urged me to inform her with what disease her niece was troubled. I was not fool enough to own my ignorance; on the contrary, I took upon myself as a man of science, and after my master's example, pronounced solemnly that the disorder accrued to the patient from the defect of natural perspiration; that consequently she must lose blood as soon as possible, because if we could not open one pore, we always open another: and I finished my prescription with warm water, to do the thing methodically.

I shortened my visit as much as possible, and ran to the son of Nunez, whom I met just as he was going out on an

errand for his master. I told him my new adventure, and asked his advice about laying an information against Camilla. Pooh! Nonsense! replied he; that would not be the way to get your ring again. Those gentry think restitution double trouble. Call to mind your imprisonment at Astorga; your horse, your money, your very clothes, did not they all centre in the hands of justice? We must rather set our wits to work for the recovery of your diamond. I take on myself the charge of inventing some stratagem for that purpose. I will deliberate on it in my way to the hospital, where I have to say but two words from my master to the purveyor. Do you wait for me at our house of call, and do not be on the fret: I will be with you shortly.

I had waited, however, more than three hours at the appointed place, when he arrived. I did not know him again at first. Besides that he had changed his dress and platted his hair, a pair of false whiskers covered half his face. He wore an immense sword with a hilt of at least three feet in circumference, and marched at the head of five men of as swaggering an air as himself, with bushy whiskers and long rapiers. Good day to you, Signor Gil Blas, said he by way of salutation; behold an alguazil upon a new construction, and marshalmen of like materials in these brave fellows my companions. We have only to be shown where the woman lodges who purloined the diamond, and we will obtain restitution, take my word for it. I hugged Fabricio at this discourse, which let me into the plot, and testified loudly my approval of the expedient. I paid my respects also to the masquerading marshalmen. They were three servants and two journeymen barbers of his acquaintance, whom he had engaged to act this farce. I ordered wine to be served round to the detachment, and we all went together at nightfall to Camilla's residence. The door was shut, and we knocked. The old woman, taking my companions to be on the scent of justice, and knowing they would not come into that neighbourhood for nothing, was terribly frightened. Cheer up again, good mother, said Fabricio; we are only come here upon a little business which will be soon settled. At these words we made our entry, and found our way to the sick chamber, under the guidance of the old dowager who walked before us, and by favour of a wax taper which she carried in a silver candlestick. I took

the light, went to the bedside, and, making Camilla take particular notice of my features. Traitress, said I, call to mind the too credulous Gil Blas whom you have deceived. Ah! thou wickedness personified, at last I have caught thee. The corregidor has taken down my deposition, and ordered this alguazil to arrest you. Come, officer, said I to Fabricio, do your duty. There is no need, replied he, swelling his voice, to inflame my severity. The face of that wretch is not new to me: she has long been marked with red letters in my pocket-book. Get up, my princess, dress your royal person with all possible dispatch. I will be your squire, and lodge you in durance vile, if you have no objection.

At these words, Camilla, ill as she was, observing two marshalmen with large whiskers ready to drag her out of bed by main force, sat up of herself, clasped her hands in an attitude of supplication; and looking at me ruefully, said, Signor Gil Blas, have compassion on me: I call as a witness to my entreaties the chaste mother whose virtues you inherit. Guilty as I am, my misfortunes are greater than my crimes. I will give you back your diamond, so do not be my ruin. Speaking to this effect, she drew my ring from her finger, and gave it me back. But I told her my diamond was not enough, and that she must refund the thousand ducats they had embezzled in the ready-furnished lodging. Oh! as for your ducats, replied she, ask me not about them. That false-hearted deceiver, Don Raphael, whom I have not seen from that time to this, carried them off the very same night. O ho! my little darling, said Fabricio in his turn, that will not do, you had a hand in the robbery, whether you went snacks in the profit or no. You will not come off so cheaply. Your having been accessory to Don Raphael's manœuvres is enough to render you liable to an examination. Your past life is very equivocal; and you must have a good deal upon your conscience. You will have the goodness, if you please, just to step into the town jail, and there unburden yourself by a general confession. This good old lady shall keep you company; it is hard if she cannot tell a world of curious stories, such as Mr Corregidor will be delighted to hear.

The two women, at these words, brought every engine of pity into play to soften us. They filled the air with cries, complaints, and lamentations. While the old woman on

her knees, sometimes to the alguazil and sometimes to his attendants, endeavoured to melt their stubborn hearts, Camilla implored me, in the most touching terms, to save her from the hands of justice. I pretended to relent. Officer, said I to the son of Nunez, since I have got my diamond, I do not much care about anything else. It would be no pleasure to me to be the means of pain to that poor woman; I want not the death of a sinner. Out upon you, answered he, you set up for humanity! you would make a bad tipstaff. I must do my errand. My positive orders are to arrest these virgins of the sun; his honour the corregidor means to make an example of them. Nay! for mercy's sake, replied I, pay some little deference to my wishes, and slacken a little of your severity, on the ground of the present these ladies are on the point of offering to your acceptance. Oh! that is another matter, rejoined he; that is what you may call a figure of rhetoric suited to all capacities and all occasions. Well, then, let us see, what have they to give me? I have a pearl necklace, said Camilla, and drop ear-rings of considerable value. Yes; but, interrupted he roughly, if these articles are the produce of the Philippine Isles, I will have none of them. You may take them in perfect safety, replied she: I warrant them real. At the same time she made the old woman bring a little box, whence she took out the necklace and ear-rings, which she put within the grasp of this incorruptible minister. Though he was much such a judge of jewellery as myself, he had no doubt of the drops being real, as well as the pearls. These trinkets, said he, after having looked at them minutely, seem to be of good quality and fashion: and if the silver candlestick is thrown into the bargain, I would not answer for my own honesty. You had better not, said I in my turn to Camilla, for a trifle, reject so moderate and fair a composition. While uttering these words, I returned the taper to the old woman, and handed the candlestick over to Fabricio, who, stopping there because perhaps he espied nothing else that was portable in the room, said to the two women: Farewell, my dainty misses, set your hearts at rest, I will report you to his worship the corregidor, as purer than unsmutched snow. We can turn him round our finger; and never tell him the truth, but when we are not paid for our lies.

CHAPTER V

SEQUEL OF THE FOREGOING ADVENTURE. GIL BLAS RETIRES FROM PRACTICE, AND FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF VALLADOLID.

After having thus carried Fabricio's plan into effect, we took our leave of Camilla's lodging, hugging ourselves on a success beyond our expectation; for we had only reckoned on the ring. We carried off without ceremony all we could get besides. Far from making it a point of conscience not to steal from a description of ladies whose names are commonly associated with rogues, we thought to cover some scores of other sins by so meritorious an action. Gentlemen, said Fabricio, when we were in the street, my counsel is for returning to our tavern, and devoting the night to a regale. To-morrow we will sell the candlestick, the necklace, the drop ear-rings, and then share the prize money like brother adventurers, after which every man shall tramp home again, and make the best excuse he can to his master. His worship the alguazil's idea seemed equally bright and judicious. We returned rank and file to the tavern, some in the pious hope of finding a plausible excuse for having slept abroad, others in a desperate indifference about being turned out of doors without a character.

We ordered a good supper to be got ready, and sat down to table with our physical and mental powers in full vigour. The relish was heightened by a thousand pleasant anecdotes. Fabricio, of all men in the world, having the happy knack of a chairman in a company of jovial spirits, kept the table in a roar. There escaped from him I know not how many charges of true Castilian wit, worth more either in the schools of philosophy or the exchange of commerce than the drug of Attic salt. While we were in a full peal of laughter, we were made to laugh on the other side of our mouths by an unforeseen occurrence. There appeared at table a man of no contemptible prowess, followed by two other as ill-looking dogs as ever existed. After this specimen we had three others, and reckoned up to a dozen, marching in by triplets. They were armed with carbines, swords, and bayonets. We

could not mistake their office, and were at no loss to guess their business. At first we had a mind to be refractory; but they beset us in an instant, and kept us under, as much by their numbers as by their weapons. Gentlemen, said the captain commandant in a jeering strain, I have been informed by what ingenious artifice you have recovered a ring from the custody of a lady no better than she should be. Undoubtedly, the device was admirable, and well deserves a civic crown; the patriotism of our police will not be found wanting. Justice, with her lodgings to let for gentry of your description, will not be deficient in her acknowledgments for so brilliant a display of genius. The company to whom this introductory address was directed, looked a little sheepish on the occasion. Our countenances fell; and Camilla had her full revenge. Fabricio, however, though pale and puzzled, made an attempt at a defence. Sir, said he, we did it in the innocence of our hearts, and of course we shall be forgiven this not immoral fraud? What the devil, replied the commandant in a rage, do you call this a not immoral fraud? Moral or immoral, it may bring you to the gallows. Besides that the power of restitution is too sacred to be assumed by the individual, you have made away with a candlestick, a necklace, and a pair of drop ear-rings: and what is worse, you have committed your rascalities in the livery of the law. Scoundrels dressing themselves up like the pillars of morality to undermine its very foundation! I shall wish you much joy if you are condemned to nothing worse than mowing the salt marsh. When he had impressed it on our convictions that the affair was even more serious than our first fears, we threw ourselves on his mercy, and implored him to have pity on our tender years, but his stubborn heart was relentless. He rejected moreover the proposal of relinquishing the necklace, earrings, and candlestick; nay, he was deaf to the rhetoric of my ring: perhaps because I offered it before too many witnesses: in short, he was the most obdurate dog of his kennel. He ordered my companions to be handcuffed, and sent us in a body to the public prison. As we were on our way, one of the marshalmen acquainted me that Camilla's old vixen, suspecting us not to be licensed scouts of justice, had dogged us to the tavern; and having satisfied her doubts, in revenge informed against us to the patrole.

We were searched in the first instance. Away went the necklace, the ear-rings, and the candlestick. They picked my pocket of my ring, and my ruby of the Philippine Isles; without even sparing the few fees I had received in the forenoon for my prescriptions: so that it was plain trade was carried on by the same firm at Valladolid as at Astorga, and that all these reformers held the same creed. While they rifled me of my trinkets and money, the lord in waiting of the patrole made known our adventure to the inferior agents of legal rapine. The trespass appeared so audacious that the majority voted it capital. A few kind souls were of opinion that we might come off for two hundred lashes a piece, with a few years on board the galleys. Waiting his lordship's sentence, we were locked up in a cell, where we lay upon straw, spread over our stable like a litter for horses. There might we have foddered for an age, and at last have been turned out to grass in the galleys, if on the morrow Signor Manuel Ordonnez had not got wind of our affair, and determined to release Fabricio; which he could not do without making a general gaol delivery. He was a man of the first credit in the town: his interest was exerted for us, and partly by his own influence, and partly by that of his friends, he obtained our enlargement at the end of three days. But the period of delivery is always moulting time with gaol birds; the candlestick, the necklace, the ear-rings, my ring, and the ruby, all was left behind. One could not help repeating those excellent lines of Virgil, beginning with *Sic vos non vobis.*

As soon as we were at liberty we returned to our masters. Doctor Sangrado received me kindly; My poor Gil Blas, said he, it was but this morning I was acquainted with thy misfortune. I was just setting about an active canvass for thee. We must derive comfort from adversity, my friend, and attach ourselves more than ever to the practice of physic. I affirmed that to be my intention; and in truth I laid about me. Far from wanting employment, it happened by a kind providence, as my master had foretold, to be a very sickly season. The smallpox and a malignant fever took alternate possession of the town and the suburbs. All the physicians in Valladolid had their share of business, and we not the least. We saw eight or ten patients a day; so that the kettle was kept on the simmer, and the blood in the

action of transpiring. But things will happen cross; they died to a man, either by our fault or their own. If their case was hopeless, we were not to blame; and if it was not hopeless, they were. Three visits to a patient was the length of our tether. About the second, we sometimes ran foul of the undertaker; or when we had been more fortunate than usual, the patient had got no further than the point of death. As I was but a young physician, not yet hardened to the trade of an assassin, I grieved over the melancholy issue of my own theory and practice. Sir, said I, one evening to Doctor Sangrado, I call heaven to witness on the spot that I have never strayed from your infallible method; and yet I have never saved a patient: one would think they died out of spite, and were on the other side of the great medical question. This very day I came across two of them, going into the country to be buried. My good lad, replied he, my experience nearly comes to the same point. It is but seldom I have the pleasure of curing my kind and partial friends. If I had less confidence in my principles, I should think my prescriptions had set their faces against the work they were intended to perform. If you will take a hint, sir, replied I, we had better vary our system. Let us give, by way of experiment, chemical preparations to our patients; the worst they can do is to tread in the steps of our pure dilutions and our phlebotomizing evacuations. I would willingly give it a trial, rejoined he, if it were a matter of indifference, but I have published on the practice of bleeding and the use of drenches: would you have me cut the throat of my own fame as an author! Oh! you are in the right, resumed I; our enemies must not gain this triumph over us; they would say that you were out of conceit with your own systems, and would ruin your reputation for consistency. Perish the people, perish rather our nobility and clergy! But let us go on in the old path. After all, our brethren of the faculty, with all their tenderness about bleeding, have no patent for longevity any more than ourselves; and we may set off their drugs against our specifics.

We went on working double tides, and did so much execution, that in less than six weeks we made as many widows and orphans as the siege of Troy. The plague must have got into Valladolid by the number of funerals. Day after day came some father or other to know what was

become of his son, who was last seen in our hands; or else a stupid fellow of an uncle, who had a foolish hankering after a deceased nephew. With respect to the nephews and sons, on whose uncles and fathers we had equalized our system of destruction, they thought that least said was soonest mended. Husbands were altogether on their good behaviour, they would not split a hair about the loss of a wife or two. The real sufferers to whose reproaches we were exposed, were sometimes quite savage in their grief; without being mealy-mouthed in their expressions, they called us blockheads and assassins. I was concerned at their bad language; but my master, who was up to every circumstance, listened to their abuse with the utmost indifference. Yet I might have grown as callous as himself to popular reproach, if heaven, interposing its shield between the invalids of Valladolid and one of their scourges, had not providentially raised up an incident to disgust me with medicine, which from the outset had been disgusted with me.

The idle fellows about town assembled every day in our neighbourhood for a game of tennis. Among the number was one of those professed bullies who set up for great Dons, and are the complete cocks of the tennis-court. He was a Biscayan, and assumed the title of Don Roderic de Mondragon. His age might be about thirty. His size was somewhat above the common, but he was lean and bony. Besides two sparkling little eyes rolling about in his head and throwing out defiance against all bystanders, a very broad nose came in between a pair of red whiskers, which turned up like a hook as high as the temples. His phraseology was so rough and uncouth that the very sound of his voice would throw a quiet man into an ague. This tyrant over both the rackets and the game was lord paramount in all disputes between the players; and there was no appeal from his decisions, but at the risk of receiving a challenge the next day. Precisely as I have drawn Signor Don Roderic, whom the Don in the foreground of his titles could never make a gentleman, Signor Don Roderic was sweet upon the mistress of the tennis court. She was a woman of forty, in good circumstances, as charming as forty can well be, just entering on the second year of her widowhood. I know not how he made himself agreeable; certainly not by his exterior recommendations, but probably by that within

which passeth show. However that might be, she took a fancy to him, and began to turn her thoughts towards the holy state of matrimony; but while that great event was in agitation, for the punishment of her sins she was taken with a malignant fever, and with me for a physician. Had the disorder been ever so slight, my practice would have made a serious job of it. At the expiration of four days there was not a dry eye in the tennis court. The mistress joined the outward-bound colony of my patients, and her family administered to her effects. Don Roderic, distracted at the loss of his mistress, or rather disappointed of a good establishment, was not satisfied with fretting and fuming at me, but swore he would run me through the body, or even frown me into a nonentity. A good-natured neighbour apprised me of this vow, with a caution to keep at home, for fear of coming across this devil of a fellow. This warning, though taken in good part, was a source of anxiety and apprehension. I was eternally fancying the enraged Biscayan laying siege to the outworks of my citadel. There was no getting a moment's respite from alarm. This circumstance weaned me from the practice of medicine, and I thought of nothing but deliverance from my horrors. On went my embroidered suit once more. Taking leave of my master, who did all he could to detain me, I got out of town with the dawn, not heedless of that terrible Don Roderic, who might waylay me on the road.

CHAPTER VI

HIS ROUTE FROM VALLADOLID, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF HIS FELLOW-TRAVELLER

I TRUDGED on at a great rate, and looked behind from time to time, to see if that dreadful Biscayan was not following me. My imagination was so engrossed by the fellow, that he haunted me in every tree and bush; my heart was in my mouth for fear at every foot-fall. But I took courage again at the distance of about a league, and went on more gently towards Madrid, whither I proposed directing my steps. I had no attachment to Valladolid. All my regret was at tearing myself from Fabricio, my dear Pylades, of

whom I had not so much as taken my leave. It was no grievance to give up physic; on the contrary, I prayed heaven to forgive me for having tampered with it. Yet I did not count over the contents of my purse with less pleasure, because they were the wages of murder. In this I took after those ladies who retire with a fortune to lead pious lives, and think it hard if they may not fatten religiously on the hard earnings of their libertine profession. I had, in rials, somewhere about the value of five ducats, and this was the sum total of my property. With these I designed repairing to Madrid, where I had no doubt of finding a good service. Besides, I wished above all things to be in that magnificent city, the boasted epitome of the world and all its wonders.

While I was recollecting what I had heard of it, and enjoying beforehand the pleasures it affords, I heard the voice of a man coming after me, and singing till he had scraped his throat. He had a wallet on his back, a guitar suspended from his neck, and a long sword by his side. He got on at such a rate, as soon to overtake me. Who should it be but one of the two journeymen barbers with whom I had been in gaol for the adventure of the ring. We knew one another at once, though we had shifted our dresses, and were in a thousand marvels at meeting so unexpectedly on the highway. If I testified my delight at having such a fellow-traveller, he seemed on his side to feel an excess of rapture at the renewal of our acquaintance. I told him why I had left Valladolid, and he trusted his own secret to me in return, by stating himself to have had a little brush with his master, on which they had taken an everlasting leave of one another. Had it been my pleasure, continued he, to have taken up my abode longer in Valladolid, ten shops would take me in for one that would have turned me out; since, vanity apart, I may safely say there is not a barber in all Spain better qualified to shave all sorts of beards, with the grain or against the grain, and to curl a pair of whiskers. But I could no longer fight against a hankering after my native place, whence I departed full ten years since. I wish to inhale a little of my own country air, and to learn the present situation of my family. I shall be among them the day after to-morrow, at a place called Olmédo, a populous village on this side of Segovia.

I resolved on accompanying this barber home, and going to Segovia for the chance of a cast to Madrid. We began entertaining one another with indifferent subjects as we went along. The young fellow was perfectly good-humoured, with a ready wit. After an hour's conversation, he asked me if I was hungry. I referred him to the first house of call for my answer. To stop dilapidations till we get there, said he, we may renew our term by a little breakfast from my wallet. When I am on a journey I am always my own caterer. None of your woollen drapery, nor linen drapery, nor any of your frippery or trumpery. I hate ostentation. My wallet contains nothing but a little exercise for my grinders, my razors, and a wash-ball. I extolled his discretion, and agreed with all my heart to the bargain he proposed. My appetite was keen and sharp set for a comfortable meal; after what he had said, I could expect no less. We drew aside a little from the high road, and sat down upon the grass. There my little journeyman barber laid out his provisions, consisting of five or six onions, with some scraps of bread and cheese; but the best lot in the auction was a little leathern bottle, full, as he said, of choice, delicate wine. Though the solids were not very relishing, the calls of hunger did not allow either of us to be dainty; and we emptied the bottle too, containing about two pints of a wine one could not recommend without some remorse of conscience. We then rose from table and set out again on the tramp in high glee. The barber, who had heard some little snatches of my story from Fabricio, entreated me to furnish him with the whole from the best authority. It was impossible to refuse so munificent a host; I therefore gave him the satisfaction he required. In my turn I called on him, as an acknowledgment of my frankness, to communicate the leading circumstances of his terrestrial peregrinations. Oh! as for my adventures, exclaimed he, they are scarcely worth recording, a mere catalogue of common occurrences. Nevertheless, since we have nothing else to do, I will run over the narrative, such as it is. At the same time he entered on the recital nearly in the following terms.

CHAPTER VII

THE JOURNEYMAN BARBER'S STORY

I TAKE up my tale from the origin of things. My grandfather, Ferdinand Perez de la Fuenta, barber-general to the village of Olmédo for fifty years, died, leaving four sons. The eldest, Nicholas, succeeded to the shop, and lathered himself into the good graces of the customers. Bertrand, the next, having taken a fancy to trade, set up for a mercer; and Thomas, who was the third, turned schoolmaster. As for the fourth, by name Pedro, feeling within himself the high destinies of learning, he sold a dirty acre or two which fell to his share, and went to settle at Madrid, where he hoped one day to distinguish himself by his genius and erudition. The other three brothers would not part; they fixed their quarters at Olmédo, marrying peasants' daughters, who brought their husbands very little dowry, except an annual present of a chopping young rustic. They had a most public-spirited emulation in child-bearing. My mother, the barber's wife, favoured the world with a contribution of six within the first five years of her marriage. I was among the number. My father initiated me betimes in the mysteries of shaving; and when he saw me grown up to the age of fifteen, laid this wallet across my shoulders, presented me with a long sword, and said—Go, Diego, you are now qualified to gain your own livelihood; go and travel about. You want a little acquaintance with the world to give you a polish, and improve you in your art. Off with you! and do not return to Olmédo till you have made the tour of Spain, nor let me hear of you till that is accomplished. Finishing with this injunction, he embraced me with fatherly affection, and shoved me out of doors by the shoulders.

Such were the parting benedictions of my sire. As for my mother, who had more the touch of nature in her manners, she seemed to feel somewhat at my departure. She dropped a few tears, and even slipped a ducat by stealth into my hand. Thus was I sent from Olmédo into the wide world, and took the road of Segovia. I did not go two hundred yards without stopping to examine my bag. I had a mind to view its contents, and to know the precise

amount of my possessions. There I found a case with two razors, which must have travelled post over the chins of ten generations, by the evidence of their wear and tear, with a strap to set them, and a bit of soap. In addition to this, a coarse shirt quite new, a pair of my father's shoes quite old, and what rejoiced me more than all the rest, a rouleau of twenty rials in a linen bag. Behold the sum total of my personals. You may conclude master Nicholas, the barber, to have reckoned a good deal on my ingenuity, by his turning me adrift with so slender a provision. Yet a ducat and twenty rials, by way of fortune, was enough to turn the head of a young man unaccustomed to money concerns. I fancied my stock of cash inexhaustible; and pursued my journey in the sunshine of brilliant anticipation, looking from time to time at the hilt of my rapier, while the blade was striking against the calf of my leg at every step, or tripping up my heels.

In the evening I reached the village of Ataquinés with a very catholic stomach. I put up at the inn; and, as if I meant to spend freely, asked, in a lofty tone, what there was for supper. The landlord examined my pretensions with his eye, and finding according to what cloth my coat was cut, said with true publican's civility—Yes, yes, my worthy master, you shall have no reason to complain; we will treat you like a lord. With this assurance, he showed me into a little room, whither he brought me, a quarter of an hour afterwards, a ragout made of a great he cat, on which I feasted with as famous an appetite as if it had been hare or rabbit. This excellent dish was washed down by so choice a wine, that the king had no better in his cellars. I found out, however, that it was pricked; but this was no hindrance to my doing it as much honour as the he cat. The last article in this entertainment for a lord was a bed better adapted to drive sleep away than to invite it. Figure it to yourself about the width of a coffin, and so short that I could not stretch my legs, though none of the longest. Besides, there was neither mattress nor feather bed, but merely a little straw sewed up in a sheet folded double, which was laid down clean for every hundredth traveller, and served the other ninety-nine, one after another, without washing. Nevertheless, in such a bed, with a stomach distended to a surfeit by fricasseed cat, and then raked by sour wine,

thanks to youth and a good constitution, I slept soundly, and passed the night without being disturbed.

On the following day when I had breakfasted, and paid the reckoning as I had been treated, like a lord, I made but one stage to Segovia. On my arrival, I had the good fortune to find a shop, where they took me in for my board and lodging; but I staid there only six months; a journeyman barber, with whom I got acquainted, was going to Madrid, and drew me in to set off with him. I had no difficulty in procuring a situation on the same footing as at Segovia. I got into a shop of the very best custom. It is true, it was near the church of the Holy Cross, and that the neighbourhood of the Prince's Theatre brought a great deal of business. My master, two stirring fellows, and myself, could scarcely lather the chins of the people who came to be shaved. They were of all trades and conditions; among the rest, players and authors. One day, two persons of the last description happened to meet. They began conversing about the poets and pieces in vogue, when one of them mentioned my uncle's name: a circumstance which drew my attention more particularly to their discourse. Don Juan de Zavaleta, said one, will never do any good as an author. A man of a cold genius, without a spark of fancy! he has written himself down at a terrible rate by his last publication. And Louis Velez de Guevara, said the other, what has he done? A fine work to bring before the public! Was there ever anything so wretched? They mentioned I know not how many poets besides, whose names I have forgotten: I only recollect that they said no good of them. As for my uncle, they made a more honourable mention of him, agreeing that he was a personage of merit. Yes, said one, Don Pédro de la Fuenta is an excellent author; there is a sly humour in his compositions, blended with solid sense, which communicates an attic poignancy to their general effect. I am not surprised at his popularity both in court and city, nor at the pensions settled on him by the great. For many years past, said the other, he has enjoyed a very large income. He lives at the Duke de Medina Celi's table, and has an apartment in his house, so that he is at no expense: he must be very well in the world.

I lost not a syllable of what these poets were saying about my uncle. We had learnt in the family, that he made a

noise in Madrid by his works; some travellers, passing through Olmédo, had told us so; but as he took no notice of us, and seemed to have weaned himself from all natural ties, we on our side lived in a state of perfect indifference about him. Yet nature will prevail: as soon as I had heard that he was in a fair way, and had learned where he lived, I was tempted to go and call upon him. One thing staggered me a little; the literati had styled him Don Pédro. This don was an awkward circumstance: I had my doubts whether he might not be some other poet of the name, and not my uncle. Yet that apprehension did not damp my ardour. I thought he might have been ennobled for his wit, and determined to pay him a visit. For this purpose, with my master's leave, I tricked myself out one morning as well as I could, and sallied from our shop, a little proud of being nephew to a man who had gained so high a character by his genius. Barbers are not the most diffident people in the world. I began to conceive no mean opinion of myself; and riding the high horse with all the arrogance of greatness, inquired my way to the Duke de Medina Celi's palace. I rang at the gate, and said I wanted to speak with Signor Don Pédro de la Fuenta. The porter pointed with his finger to a narrow staircase at the fag end of the court, and answered —Go up there, then knock at the first door on your right. I did as he directed me; and knocked at a door. It was opened by a young man, whom I asked if those were the apartments of Signor Don Pédro de la Fuenta. Yes, answered he, but you cannot speak to him at present. I should be very glad, said I, just to say, How are you? I bring him news of his family. An you brought him news of the pope, replied he, I could not introduce you just now. He is writing, and while his wits are at work, he must not be disturbed. He will not be able to receive company till noon; take a turn, and come back about that time.

I departed, and walked about town all the morning, incessantly meditating on the reception my uncle would give me. I think, said I within myself, he will be overjoyed to see me. I measured his feelings by my own, and prepared myself for a very affecting discovery. I returned punctually to the appointed hour. You are just in time, said the servant: my master was going out. Wait here a moment: I will announce you. With these words, he left me in the

antechamber. He returned almost immediately, and showed me into his master's room. The face struck me all at once as a family likeness. To be sure he was the very image of my uncle Thomas; they might have been taken for twins. I bowed down to the ground, and introduced myself as the son of Master Nicholas de la Fuenta, the barber of Olmédo. I likewise informed him, that I had been working at my father's trade in Madrid, for these three weeks, as a journeyman, and intended making the tour of Spain to complete my education. While I was speaking, my uncle was evidently in a brown study. He seemed to doubt whether he should disown me at once, or get rid of me with some little sacrifice to decency. The latter course he adopted. Affecting the affable: Well, my good kinsman, how are your father and your uncles? Do they get on in the world? I began thereupon by laying before him the family knack at propagation. All the children, male and female, called over by their names, with their godfathers and godmothers included in the list! He took no extravagant interest in the particulars of my tale; but leading to his own purposes, Diego, replied he, I am quite of your mind. You should go from place to place, and see a variety of practice. I would not have you tarry longer at Madrid: it is a very dangerous residence for youth; you may get into bad habits, my sweet fellow. Other towns will suit you better; the state of society in the provinces is more patriarchal and philosophical. Determine on emigration; and when your departure is fixed, come and take your leave. I will contribute a pistole to the tour of Spain. With this kind assurance, he handed me out of the room, and sent me packing.

I had not worldly wisdom enough to find out that he wanted to get quit of me. I went back to our shop, and gave my master an account of the visit I had paid. He looked no deeper than myself into Signor Don Pédro's motives, and observed: I cannot help differing from your worthy uncle, so far from advising you to travel the provinces, the real thing would be, in my opinion, to give you a comfortable settlement in this city. He is hand in glove with the first people; it is an easy matter for him to establish you in a great family; and that is a fortune at once. Struck with this lucky discovery, which seemed to settle the point

without difficulty, I called on my uncle again two days afterwards, and made a modest proposal to him for a situation about some leading character at court. But the hint was not taken kindly. A proud man, living at free quarters among the great, and dining with them in a family party, did not exactly wish that, while he was sitting at my lord's table, his nephew should be a guest in the servants' hall. Little Diego might bring a scandal on Signor Don Pédro. He had no hesitation, therefore, in fairly turning me out of doors, and that with a flea in my ear. What, you little rascal, said he in a fit of extravagance, do you mean to relinquish your calling? Begone, I consign you to the reptile whose pernicious counsels will be your ruin. Take your leave of these premises, and never set your foot on them again, or you shall have the reception you deserve! I was absolutely stunned at this language, and still more at the peremptory tone my uncle assumed. With tears in my eyes I withdrew, quite overcome by his severity. Yet, as I had always been lively and confident in my temper, I soon wiped away my tears. My grief was even turned into resentment, and I determined to take no further notice of this unnatural relative, whose kind offices I had hitherto been contented to want.

My attention was henceforth directed to the cultivation of my professional talent; I was quite a plodding fellow at my trade. I scraped away all day; and in the evening, by way of relief to my scraping, I twanged the guitar. My master on that instrument was an old *Senor Escudero* whom I shaved. He taught me music in return; and he was an adept. To be sure he had formerly been a chorister in a cathedral. His name was Marcos de Obregon. He was a man of the world, with good natural parts and acquired knowledge, which jointly induced him to fix on me as an adopted son. He was engaged as an attendant on a physician's lady, resident within thirty yards of our house. I went to him in the evening, when shop was shut, and we two, sitting on the threshold of the door, made up a little concert not displeasing to the neighbourhood. It was not that our voices were very fine; but in thrumming on the catgut, we made a pretty regular accompaniment to our duet, and filled up the harmony sufficiently for the gratification of our hearers. Our music was particularly agreeable

to Donna Mergelina, the physician's wife; she came into the passage to hear us, and sometimes encored us in her favourite airs. Her husband did not interfere with her amusement. Though a Spaniard and in years, he was not possessed with jealousy; besides, his profession took up all his time; and as he came home in the evening, worn out with his numerous visits, he went to bed at an early hour, without troubling himself about his wife or our concerts. Possibly, if he thought about them at all, he might consider them as little likely to produce dangerous consequences. He had an additional security in his wife. Mergelina was young and handsome with a witness; but of so fierce a modesty, that she started at the very shadow of a man. How could he take umbrage at an amusement of so harmless and decorous a nature? He gave us leave to sing our hearts out.

One evening, as I came to the physician's door, intending to take my usual recreation, I found the old squire waiting for me. He took me by the hand: saying that he wished to take a little walk with me before we struck up our little concert. At the same time he drew me aside into a by-street, where, finding an opportunity of opening his mind: Diego, my good lad, said he with a melancholy air, I want to give you a hint in private. I much fear, my good and amiable youth, that we shall both have reason to repent of beguiling our evenings with little musical parties at my master's door. Rely on my sincere friendship: I do not grudge your lessons in singing and on the guitar; but if I could have foreseen the storm now brewing, in the name of charity! I would have selected some other spot to communicate my instructions. This address alarmed me. I entreated the gentle squire to be more explicit, and to tell me what we had to fear; for I was no Hector, and the tour of Spain was not yet finished. I will relate to you, replied he, what it concerns you to know, that you may take the proper measure of our present danger.

When I got into the service of the physician, about a year ago, he said one morning, after having introduced me to his wife: There, Marcos, you see your mistress; that is the lady you are to accompany in all her peregrinations. I was smitten with Donna Mergelina: she was lovely in the extreme, a model for an artist, and her principal attraction was the pleasantness of her deportment. Honoured sir,

replied I to the physician, it is too great a happiness to be in the train of so charming a lady. My answer was taken amiss by Mergelina, who said rather crustily, A pleasant gentleman this! He is perfectly free and easy. Believe me! His fine speeches may go a begging for me. These words, dropped from such lovely lips, seemed rather inconsistent; the manners and ideas of bumpkins and dairy-maids coupled with all the graces of the most lovely woman in the world! As for her husband, he was used to her ways; and hugging himself on the unrivalled character of his rib, Marcos, said he, my wife is a miracle of chastity. Then, observing her put on her veil, and make herself ready to go to Mass, he told me to attend on her at church. We were no sooner in the street than we met, and it was no wonder, blades who, struck with Donna Mergelina's genteel carriage, told her a thousand flattering tales as they passed by. She was not backward in her answers; but silly and ill-timed, beyond what you can conceive. They were all in amaze, and could not imagine how a woman should take it amiss to be complimented. Why really! madam, said I to her at first, you had better be silent, or shut your ears to their addresses, than reply with asperity. No, no, replied she: I will teach these coxcombs that I am not a woman to put up with impertinence. In short, her absurdity went so far, that I could not help telling her my mind, at the hazard of her displeasure. I gave her to understand, yet with the greatest possible caution, that she was unjust to Nature, whose handiwork she marred by her preposterous ferocity; that a woman of mild and polished manners might inspire love without the aid of beauty; whereas the loveliest of the sex, divested of female softness, was in danger of becoming the public scorn. To this ratiocination, I added collateral arguments, always directed to the amendment of her manners. After having moralized to no purpose, I was afraid my freedom might exasperate my mistress, and draw upon me some taunting repartee. Nevertheless she did not mutiny against my advice; but silently rendered it of no avail, and thus we went on from day to day.

I was weary of pointing out her errors to no purpose, and gave her up to the ferocious temperament of her nature. Yet, could you think it? the savage humour of that proud woman is entirely changed within these two months. She

has a kind word for all the world, and manners the most accommodating. It is no longer the same Mergelina who gave such homely answers to the compliments of her swains: she is become assailable by flattery; loves to be told she is handsome, that a man cannot look at her without paying for it: her ears itch for fine speeches, and she is become a very woman. Such a change is almost inconceivable: and the best of the joke is, that you are the worker of this unparalleled miracle. Yes, my dear Diego, it is you who have transformed Donna Mergelina; you have softened down the tigress into a domestic animal; in a word, you have made her feel. I have observed it more than once; and never trust my knowledge of the sex, if she is not desperately in love with you. Such, my dear boy, is the melancholy news I have to communicate, the awkward predicament in which we stand.

I do not see, said I in my turn to the old man, that there is anything so melancholy in this accident, or any peculiar awkwardness in being the object of a pretty woman's partiality. Ah! Diego, replied he, you argue like a young man: you only see the bait, without guarding against the hook: pleasure is your lure: while my thoughts are directed to the unpleasant circumstances attending it. Murder will out. If you go on singing at our door, you will provoke Mergelina's passion; and she probably, losing all command over herself, will betray her weakness to her husband, Doctor Oloroso. That wretched husband, so complying now that he thinks there is no ground for jealousy, will run wild, take signal vengeance upon her, and perhaps play some dog's trick or other to you and me. Well, then! rejoined I, your reasons shall be conclusive with me, and your sage counsels my rule. Lay down the line of conduct I am to adopt for the prevention of any left-handed catastrophe. We will have no more concerts, was his peremptory decree. Do not show yourself any more to my mistress: when the sight of you does not inflame her, she will recover her composure. Stay within doors: I will call in upon you, and we will torture the guitar with impunity. With all my heart, said I, and I will never set my foot again in your premises. In good truth, I was determined to serenade no longer before the physician's door, but henceforth to keep within the precincts of my shop, since my attractions as a man were so formidable.

In the meantime good Squire Marcos, with all his prudence, experienced in the course of a few days that the plan he had devised to quench Donna Mergelina's flame produced a directly opposite effect. The lady on the second night not hearing me sing, asked why we had discontinued our concerts, and the reason of my absence. He told her I was so busy as not to have a moment to spare for relaxation. She seemed satisfied with that excuse, and for three days longer bore the disappointment of all her hopes like a heroine; but at the end of that period, my martyr to the tender passion lost all patience, and said to her conductor—You are playing false with me, Marcos; Diego has not discontinued his visits without a cause. This mystery must be unravelled. Speak, I command you; conceal nothing from me. Madam, answered he, making use of another subterfuge, since the truth must be told, it has often happened to him to find the cloth taken away at home after the concert; he cannot run the risk any longer of going to bed without his supper. What, without his supper! exclaimed she in an agony, why did not you tell me so sooner? Go to bed without his supper! Oh! the poor little sufferer! Go to him this instant, and let him come again this evening; he shall not go home starving any more, there shall always be a luncheon for him.

What do I hear? said the squire, affecting astonishment at this language; oh heaven, what a reverse! Is this you, madam, and are these your sentiments? Well-a-day! Since when are you so compassionate and tender-hearted? Since, replied she significantly, since you have lived in this house, or rather since you disapproved my disdainful manners, and have laboured to soften the acrimony of my temper. But, alas! added she, in a melting mood, I have gone from one extreme to the other. Proud and insensible as I was, I am become too susceptible, too tender. I am enamoured of your young friend Diego, and I cannot help myself; his absence, far from allaying my ardour, only adds fuel to the fire. Is it possible, resumed the old man, that a young fellow with neither face nor person should have inspired so strong a passion? I could make allowances for your feelings, if they had been set afloat by some nobleman of distinguished merit. . . . Ah! Marcos, interrupted Mergelina, I am not like the rest of my sex; or rather, spite of your long experience, your penetration is but shallow if

you fancy merit to have much share in our choice. Judging by myself, we all leap before we look. Love is a mental derangement, forcibly drawing all our views and attachments into one vortex; a species of hydrophobia. Have done then with your hints that Diego is not worthy of my tenderness; that he has it is enough, to invest him with a thousand perfections too ætherial for your gross sight, and perhaps too unsubstantial for any but a lover's perception. In vain you disparage his features or his stature; in my eyes he was created to undo, and encircled by the hand of Nature with the glories of the opening day. Nay, more, there is a thrilling sweetness in his voice; his touch on the guitar has the taste of an amateur, and the execution of a professor. But, madam, subjoined Marcos, do you consider who Diego is? The meanness of his station. . . . My own is very little better, interrupted she again; though were I of noble birth, it would make no difference in my sensations.

The result of that conference was that the squire, concluding he should make no impression on the mind of his mistress, gave over struggling with her obstinacy, as a skilful pilot runs before the storm, though it carries him out to sea from his intended port. He did more: to satisfy his patroness he paid me a visit, took me aside, and after having related what had passed between them—You see, Diego, said he, that we cannot dispense with the performance of our concerts at Mergelina's door. Absolutely, my friend, that lady must see you again; otherwise she may commit some act of desperation fatal to her good name. I was not inexorable, but answered Marcos that I would attend with my guitar early in the evening; and dispatched him to his mistress with the happy tidings. He executed his office, and the impassioned dame was out of her wits with joy, in the delicious prospect of hearing and seeing me in a few hours.

A most disagreeable circumstance, however, was very near disappointing her in that hope. I could not leave home before night, and for my sins, it was dark as pitch. I went groping along the street, and had got, may be, half way, when down from a window came upon my head the contents of a perfuming pan, which did not tickle my olfactory nerves very pleasantly. I may say that not a whiff was wasted, so exactly had the giver taken measure of the receiver. In this situation I was at a loss on what to resolve: to go back

by the way I came, what an exhibition before my comrades! It was surrendering myself to all their nasty witticisms. Then again, go to Mergelina in such a glorious trim, that hurt my feelings on the other side. I determined, at length, to get on towards the physician's. The old usher was waiting for me at the door. He said that Doctor Oloroso was gone to bed, and we might amuse ourselves as we liked. I answered that the first thing was to purify my drapery, at the same time relating my misfortune. He seemed to feel for me, and showed me into a hall where his mistress was sitting. As soon as the lady got wind of my adventure, and had confirmed the testimony of her nose by the evidence of her eyes, she mourned over me as grievously as if my miseries had been mortal; then, apostrophising the absent cause of my foul array, she uttered a thousand imprecations. Well, but madam! said Marcos, do moderate this ecstacy of grief; consider that such casualties will happen, there is no occasion to take on so bitterly. Why, exclaimed she with vehemence, why would you debar me from the privilege of weeping over the injuries of this tender lamb, this dove without gall, who does not so much as murmur at the affront he has sustained? Alas! why am I not a man at this moment to avenge him!

She uttered numberless soothing expressions besides, to mark distinctly the excess of her devotion, and her actions corresponded with her words; for while Marcos was employed in wiping me down with a towel, she ran into her chamber and brought out a box furnished with every variety of perfumes. She burned sweet-smelling drugs, and perfumed my clothes with them, after which she drenched me in a deluge of essences. The fumigation and aspersion ended, this bountiful lady went herself and fetched from the kitchen bread, wine, and some good slices of roast mutton, set by on purpose for me. She forced me to eat, and taking a pleasure in waiting on me, sometimes carved for me, and sometimes filled my glass, in spite of all that Marcos and myself could do to anticipate her condescension. When I had done supper, the gentlemen of the orchestra struck the key note, and tuned their sweet voices to the pitch of their guitars. We played and sung to the heart's delight of Mergelina. To be sure we took care to carol none but amorous ditties; and as we sung, I every now and then leered at her with such a

roguish meaning, as to throw oil upon the fire, for the game began to be interesting. The concert, though the acts were long, was not tedious. As for the lady, to whom hours seemed to fly like seconds, she could have been content to exhaust the night in listening, if the old squire, with whom the seconds seemed to lag like hours, had not hinted how late it was. She gave him the trouble of enforcing his moral on the lapse of time by at least ten repetitions. But she was in the hands of a man not to be turned aside from his purpose, he let her have no rest till I was gone. Sensible and provident as he was, seeing his mistress given up to a mad passion, he dreaded lest our harmony should be resolved by some discord. His fears were ominous: the physician, whether his mind misgave him of foul play, or the spirit of jealousy, hitherto on its good behaviour, had a mind to harass him gratuitously, bethought himself of quarrelling with our concerts. He did more, he put a broad negative upon them; and, without assigning his reasons for acting in this violent way, declared that he would suffer no more strangers to come about his premises.

Marcos acquainted me with this mortifying declaration, particularly levelled against my rising hopes. I had begun bobbing at this dainty cherry, and did not like to lose my game. Nevertheless, to act the part of a faithful reporter and true historian, I must own my impatience did not affect my health or spirits. Not so with Mergelina, her feelings were more alive than ever. My dear Marcos, said she to her usher, it is only from you that I look for succour. Contrive, I beseech you, that I may see Diego in private. What do you require? asked the old man with a reproachful accent. I have been but too indulgent to you. I am not a person to crown your wanton wishes at the expense of my master's honour, your good fame, and my own eternal infamy; the infamy of a man whose past life has been one continued series of faithful service and exemplary conduct. I had rather leave the family than stay in it on such scandalous conditions. Alas! Marcos, interrupted the lady, frightened out of her wits at these last words, you wring my heart by talking in this manner. Obdurate man! Can you bear the thought of sacrificing her who lays all her present agony to your account? Give me back my former pride, and that savage soul you have taken from me. Why am I no longer

happy in my very imperfections? I might now have been at peace, but your rash counsels have robbed me of the repose I then enjoyed. You, the corrector of my manners, have tampered with my morals. . . . But why do I rave, unhappy wretch as I am? why upbraid you thus wrongfully? No, my guardian angel, you are not the fatal source of my miseries; my evil destiny had decreed these tortures to await me. Lay not to heart, I conjure you on my knees, these transports of a disordered imagination. Oh mercy! my passion drives me mad, have compassion on my weakness; you are my sole support and stay: if then my life is not indifferent to you, deny me not your aid.

At these words her tears flowed in fresh torrents, and stifled her lugubrious accents. She took out her handkerchief, and throwing it over her face, fell into a chair, like a person overcome by her affliction. Old Marcos, who was perhaps one of the most tractable go-betweens in the world, could no longer steel his heart against so touching a spectacle. Pierced to the quick, he even mingled his tears with those of his mistress, and spoke to her in a softened tone—Ah! madam, why are you thus bewitching! I cannot hold out against your sorrowful complaints, my virtue yields under the pressure of my pity. I promise you all the relief in my power. No longer do I marvel at the oblivious influence of passion over duty, since mere sympathy can mislead my footsteps from its thorny paths. Thus did this pander, whose past life had been one continued series of faithful service and exemplary conduct, sell himself to the devil to feed Mergelina's illicit flame. One morning he came and talked over the whole business with me, saying at his departure, that he had a scheme in his head to bring about a private interview between us. At the thought my hopes were all re-kindled, but they glimmered tremblingly in the socket at a piece of news I heard two hours afterwards. A journeyman apothecary in the neighbourhood, one of our customers, came in to be shaved. While I was making ready to trim his bushy honours, he said—Master Diego, do you know anything about your friend, the old usher, Marcos de Obregon? Is he not going to leave Doctor Oloroso? I said, No. But he is though, replied he; he will get his dismission this very day. His master and mine were talking about it just now in my hearing, and their conversa-

tion was to the following effect: Signor Apuntador, said the physician, I have a favour to beg of you. I am not easy about an old usher of mine, and should like to place my wife under the eye of a trusty, strict, and vigilant duenna. I understand you, interrupted my master. You want Dame Melancia, my wife's directress, and indeed mine for the last six weeks, since I have been a widower. Though she would be very useful to me in housewifery, I give her up to you, from a paramount regard to your honour. You may rely upon her for the security of your brow; she is the phœnix of the duenna tribe—a spring-gun and a man-trap set in the purlieus of female chastity. During twelve whole years that she was about my wife, whose youth and beauty, you know, were not without their attractions, I never saw the least semblance of manhood within my doors. No, no! by all the powers! That game was not so easily played. And yet I must let you know that the departed saint, heaven rest her soul! had in the outset a great hankering after the delights of the flesh; but Dame Melancia cast her in a new mould, and regenerated her to virtue and self-denial. In short, such a guardian of the weaker sex is a treasure, and you will never have done thanking me for my precious gift. Hereupon the doctor expressed his rapture at the issue of the conference; and they agreed, Signor Apuntador and he, on the duenna's succeeding the old usher on this very day.

This news, which I thought probable, and turned out to be true, disturbed the pleasurable ideas, just beginning to flow afresh, and renovate my soul. After dinner, Marcos completed the convulsion, by confirming the young drug-pounder's story: My dear Diego, said the good squire, I am heartily glad that Doctor Oloroso has turned me off; it spares me a world of trouble. Besides that it hurt my feelings to be invested with the office of a spy, endless must have been the shifts and subterfuges to bring you and Mergelina together in private. We should have been rarely gravelled! Thanks to heaven, I am set free from all such perplexing cares, to say nothing of their attendant danger. On your part, my dear boy, you ought to be comforted for the loss of a few soft moments, which must have been dogged at the heels by a thousand fears and vexations. I relished Marcos' sermon well enough, because my hopes were at an end, the game was lost. I was not, it must be confessed, among the

number of those stubborn lovers who bear up against every impediment; but though I had been so, Dame Melancia would have made me let go my hold. The established character of that duenna would have daunted the adventurous spirit of a knight-errant. Yet, in whatever colours this phœnix of the duenna tribe might have been painted, I had reason to know, two or three days afterwards, that the physician's lady had unset the man-trap and spring-gun, and given a stop to this watch-dog of lubricity. As I was going out to shave one of our neighbours, a civil old gentlewoman stopped me in the street, and asked if my name was Diego de la Fuenta. I said, Yes. That being the case, replied she, I have a little business with you. Place yourself this evening at Donna Mergelina's door; and when you are there, give a signal, and you shall be let in. Vastly well! said I, what must the signal be? I can take off a cat to the life: suppose I was to mew a certain number of times? The very thing, replied this Iris of intrigue; I will carry back your answer. Your most obedient, Signor Diego! Heaven protect the sweet youth! Ah! you are a pretty one! By St Agnès, I wish I was but sweet fifteen, I would not go to market for other folks! With this hint, the old procuress waddled out of sight.

You may be sure this message put me in no small flutter. Where now was the morality of Marcos? I waited for night with impatience, and, calculating the time of Dr Oloroso's going to bed, took my station at his door. There I set up my caterwauling, till you might hear me ever so far off, to the eternal honour of the master who instructed me in that imitative art. A moment after Mergelina opened the door softly with her own dear hands, and shut it again with me on the inside. We went into the hall, where our last concert had been performed. It was dimly lighted by a small lamp, which twinkled in the chimney. We sat down side by side, and began our tender parley, each of us overcome by our emotions, but with this difference; that hers were all inspired by pleasure, while mine were somewhat tainted by fear. In vain did the divinity of my adorations assure me that we had nothing to fear from her husband. I felt the access of an ague, which unmanned my vigour. Madam, said I, how have you eluded the vigilance of your directress? After what I have heard of Dame Melancia, I

could not have conceived it possible for you to contrive the means of sending me any intelligence, much less of seeing me in private. Donna Mergelina smiled at this remark, and answered: You will no longer be surprised at our being together to-night, when I tell you what has passed between my duenna and me. As soon as she came to her place, my husband paid her a thousand compliments, and said to me: Mergelina, I consign you to the guidance of this wary lady, herself an abstract of all the virtues: in this glass you may look without a blush, and array yourself in habits of wisdom. This extraordinary personage has for these twelve years been a light to the ways of an apothecary's wife of my acquaintance; but how has she been a light to them? . . . why, as ways never were enlightened before: she turned a very slippery piece of mortal flesh into a downright nun.

This panegyric, not belied by the austere mien of Dame Melancia, cost me a flood of tears, and reduced me to despair. I fancied the din of eternal lectures from morning till night, and daily rebukes too harsh to be endured. In short, I laid my account in a life of wretchedness, beyond the patience of a woman. Keeping no measures in the expectation of such cruel sufferings, I said bluntly to the duenna, the moment I was alone with her: You mean, no doubt, to exercise your tyranny most wantonly on my poor person; but I cannot bear much severity, I warn you beforehand. I give you, moreover, fair notice, that I shall be as savage as you can be. My heart cherishes a passion, which not all your remonstrances shall tear from it: so you may act accordingly. Watch me as closely as you please; it is hard if I cannot outwit such an old thing as you. At these taunting words, I thought this saracen in petticoats was going to give me a specimen of her discipline. But so far from it, she smoothed her brow, relaxed her surly features, and primming up her mouth into a smile, promulgated this comfortable doctrine: Your temper charms me, and your frankness calls for a return. We must have been made for one another. Ah! lovely Mergelina, little do you fathom my character, to be deceived by the fine compliments of your husband the Doctor, or by my Tartar contour! There never was a creature more fortified against moral prejudices! My inducement for getting into the service of

jealous husbands is to lend myself to the enjoyments of their pretty wives. Long have I trodden the stage of life in masquerade; and I may call myself doubly happy, in the spiritual rewards of virtue, and the temporal indulgences of the opposite side. Between ourselves, mine is the system of all mankind in the long run. Real virtue is a very expensive article; plated goods look just as well, and are within the reach of all purchasers.

Put yourself under my direction. We will make Doctor Oloroso pay the piper to our dancing, or I am no duenna. By my troth, he shall go the way of Signor Apuntador and all mankind. There is no reason why the forehead of a physician should be smoother than the brow of an apothecary. Poor dear Apuntador! What fun have we had with him, his wife and I! A charming woman, that wife of his! A dear little creature, open to all mankind and prejudiced by none! Well! she is at peace, and has not left her fellow behind her! Take my word, short as her time was, she made the most of it. Let me see how many rampant chaps have been brought to their bearings in that house, without the dear deluded husband being waked out of his evening's nap! Now, madam, you may see me in my true light; and assure yourself, whatever might be the abilities of your old usher, you will not fare the worse for going further. If he was a benefit to you, I shall be a blessing.

You may judge for yourself, Diego, continued Mergelina, how well I took it of the duenna, that she laid herself open so frankly. I had taken her virtue to be of the impenetrable cast. Look you now, how much women are liable to be scandalized. But her character of plain dealing won my heart at once. I threw my arms about her neck in a rapture, which bespoke my warm and tender feelings at the thoughts of such a mother abbess. I gave her carte blanche of all my private thoughts, and put in for a speedy tête-à-tête with your own dear self. She met me on my own ground. This very morning, she engaged the old woman who spoke to you, to take the field: she is an old stager, a veteran in the service of the apothecary's wife. But the best of the joke in this comedy, added she in a paroxysm of laughter, is that Melancia, on my assurance that my husband's habit is to pass the night without stirring, is gone to bed by his side, and drones out my useless office

at this moment. So much the worse, madam, said I then to Mergelina; your device is more plausible than profitable. Your husband is very likely to wake and discover the fraud. He will not discover anything about it, replied she with no little urgency; set your heart at rest about that, and let not an empty fear poison the fountains of a pleasure, which ought to drown every vulgar and earthly consideration in the arms of a young lady who is yours for ever and ever.

The old doctor's help-mate, finding that her assurances had little effect upon my courage, left no stone unturned to put me in heart again; and she had so many encouraging ways with her that a very coward must have plucked up a little. My thoughts were all with Jupiter and Alcmena; but at the very moment that the urchin Cupid, with his train of smiles and antics, was weaving a garland to compliment the crisis of our endeavours, we were stopped in our career by an importunate knocking at the street door. In a moment, away flew love and all his covey, like game at the report of a fowling-piece. Mergelina popped me like an article of household furniture under the hall table, blew out the lamp, and, by previous agreement with her governess in the event of so unlucky an accident, placed herself at the door of her husband's bedchamber. In the mean time, the knocking continued with reiterated violence, till the whole house resounded. The physician awoke suddenly, and called Melancia. The duenna flung herself out of bed, though the doctor, taking her for his wife, begged of her not to disturb herself. She ran to her mistress, who, catching hold of her in the dark, began calling Melancia! and told her to go and see who was at the door. Madam, answered the directress, here I am at your service, go to bed again if you please; you shall soon know who it is. During this parley, Mergelina having undressed, got into bed to the doctor, who had not the least suspicion of the farce that was playing. To be sure the stage was darkened, and the actresses had very little occasion for a prompter; one of them was familiar with the boards, and the other wanted only a rehearsal or two to be perfect in her part.

The duenna, in her night-gown, made her appearance soon after, with a candle in her hand—Good doctor, said she to her master, have the goodness to get up. Our neighbour Fernandez de Buendia, the bookseller, is in an

apoplectic fit: you are sent for; time presses. The physician got on his clothes as fast as he could, and went out. His wife, in her bed-gown, came into the hall with the duenna. They dragged me from under the table more dead than alive. You have nothing to fear, Diego, said Mergelina, put yourself in proper order. At the same time she told me how things were in two words. She had half a mind to renew our amorous intercourse; but the directress knew better. Madam, said she, your husband may possibly be too late to help the bookseller to the other world, and then he will return immediately. Besides, added she, observing me benumbed with fright, it would be all lost labour upon this poor youth! He is not in a condition to answer your demands. You had better send him home, and defer the debate till to-morrow evening. Donna Mergelina was sorry for the delay, as well knowing that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush; and I flatter myself she was disappointed at not putting a cuckold's nightcap on the doctor's head.

As for me, less grieved at having drawn a blank, in the lottery of love, than rejoiced at getting my neck out of an halter, I returned to my master's, where I passed the remainder of the night in moralizing on the scene I had left. For some time, I was in doubt whether to keep my appointment on the following evening. I thought it was a foolish business from first to last; but the devil, who is always lurking for his prey, or rather taking possession of us as his lawful property, whispered in my ear that I should be a great fool to pack up my alls when the prize was falling into my hands. Mergelina too with opening and unfathomable charms! The exquisite pleasures that awaited me! I determined to stick to my text; and promising myself a larger share of self-possession, took my station the next evening at the doctor's door, between eleven and twelve, in a most spirit-stirring humour. The heavens were completely darkened, not a star to prate of my whereabout. I mewed twice or thrice to give warning of my being in the street; and, as no one answered my signal, I was not satisfied with going over the old ground, but ran up and down the cat's gamut from bass to treble, and from treble to bass, just as I used to sol-fa with a shepherd of Olmédo. I tuned my fundamental bass so musically, that a neighbour, on his re-

turn home, taking me for one of those animals whose mewings I counterfeited, picked up an unlucky flint lying at his feet, and threw it at me with all his force, saying—The devil fetch that tom cat! I received the blow on my head, and was so stunned for the moment, that I was very near falling backwards. I found the skin was broken. This was enough in all conscience to give me a surfeit of gallantry; so that, my passion oozing out with my blood, I made the best of my way homewards, where I rendered night hideous by my howling, and knocked all the family up. My master probed my wound, and played the true surgeon on it; he pronounced the consequences to be uncertain. He did all he could to make them certain; but flesh will heal in spite of the faculty; and there was not a scar remaining in three weeks. During all this time, I had not heard a word from Mergelina. The probability is that Dame Melancia, to wean her impure thoughts from me, engaged her in some better sport. However I did not concern myself about the matter; but left Madrid to continue my tour of Spain, as soon as I found myself perfectly recovered.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MEETING OF GIL BLAS AND HIS COMPANION WITH A MAN SOAKING CRUSTS OF BREAD AT A SPRING, AND THE PARTICULARS OF THEIR CONVERSATION

Signor Diego de la Fuenta related some other adventures which had since happened to him; but they were so little worthy of preservation, that I shall pass them by in silence. Yet there was no getting rid of the recital, which was tedious enough: it lasted as far as Ponte de Duero. We halted in that town the remainder of the day. Our commons at the inn consisted of a vegetable soup and a roast hare, whose genus and species we took especial pains to verify. At daybreak on the following morning we resumed our journey, after having replenished our flask with some very tolerable wine, and our wallet with some pieces of bread, and half the hare we had left at supper.

When we had gone about two leagues we waxed hungry; and, espying at about two hundred yards from the high

road some spreading trees, which threw an agreeable shade over the plain, we made up to the spot, and rested on our arms. There we met with a man from seven to eight and twenty, who was dipping crusts of bread into a spring. He had a long sword lying by him on the grass, with a soldier's knapsack, of which he had eased his shoulders. We thought his air and person better than his attire. We accosted him with civility; and he returned our salutation. He then offered us his crusts, and asked with a smile if we would take potluck with him. We answered in the affirmative, provided he had no objection to our clubbing our own breakfast, by way of making the meal more substantial. He agreed to it with the utmost readiness, and we immediately produced our provisions; which were not unacceptable to the stranger. What is all this, gentlemen, exclaimed he in a transport of joy, here is ammunition for an army! By your forecast, you must be commissaries or quartermasters. I do not travel with so much contrivance, for my part; but depend a good deal on the chances of the road. At the same time, though appearances may be against me, I can say, without vanity, that I sometimes make a very brilliant figure in the world. Would you believe that princely honours are commonly bestowed on me, and that I have guards in attendance? I comprehend you, said Diego; you mean to tell us, you are a player. You guess right, replied the other; I have been an actor for these fifteen years at least. From my very infancy, I was sent on the boards in children's parts. To deal freely, rejoined the barber, shaking his head, I do not believe a word of it. I know the players; those gentry do not travel on foot, like you, nor do they mess with St Anthony. I doubt whether you are anything better than a candle-snuffer. You may, quote the son of Thespis, think of me as you please; but my parts, for all that, are in the first line; I play the lovers. If that be the case, said my companion, I wish you much joy, and am delighted that Signor Gil Blas and myself have the honour of breakfasting with so eminent a character.

We then began to pick up our crumbs, and to gnaw the precious relics of the hare, bestowing such hearty smacks upon the bottle, as to empty it very shortly. We were all three so deeply engaged in the great affair of eating, that we

said very little till we had finished, when we resumed our conversation. I wonder, said the barber to the player, that you should be so much out at elbows. For a theatrical hero, you have but a needy exterior! I beg pardon if I speak rather freely. Rather freely! exclaimed the actor; ah! by my troth, you are not yet acquainted with Melchior Zapata. Heaven be praised, I have no mind to see things in a wrong light. You do me a pleasure by speaking so confidently: for I love to unbosom myself without reserve. I honestly own I am not rich. Here, pursued he, showing us his doublet lined with playbills, this is the common stuff which serves me for linings; and if you are curious to see my wardrobe, you shall not be disappointed. At the same time he took out of his knapsack a dress, laced with tarnished frippery, a shabby head-dress for an hero, with an old plume of feathers; silk stockings full of holes, and red morocco shoes a great deal the worse for wear. You see, said he again, that I am very little better than a beggar. That is astonishing, replied Diego: then you have neither wife nor daughter? I have a very handsome young wife, rejoined Zapata, and yet I might just as well be without her. Look with awe on the lowering aspect of my horoscope. I married a personable actress, in the hope that she would not let me die of hunger; and, to my cost, she is cursed with incorruptible chastity. Who the devil would not have been taken in as well as myself? There was but one virtuous princess in a whole strolling company, and she, plague take her! fell into my hands. It was throwing with bad luck most undoubtedly, said the barber. But then, why did not you look out for an actress in the regular theatre at Madrid? You would have been sure of your mark. You are perfectly in the right, replied the stroller; but the mischief is, we underlings dare not raise our thoughts to those illustrious heroines. It is as much as an actor of the prince's company can venture on; nay, some of them are obliged to match with citizens' daughters. Happily for our fraternity, citizens' daughters now-a-days contract theatrical notions; and you may often meet with characters among them, to the full as eccentric as any bona roba of the green-room.

Well! but have you never thought, said my fellow-traveller, of getting an engagement in that company? Is it

necessary to be a Roscius for that purpose? That is very well of you! replied Melchior, you are a wag, with your Roscius! There are twenty performers. Ask the town what it thinks of them, and you will hear a pretty character of their acting. More than half of them deserve to carry a porter's knot. Yet for all that, it is no easy matter to get upon the boards. Bribery or interest must make up for the defect of talent. I ought to know what I say since my début at Madrid, where I was hissed and cat-called as if the devil had got among the grimalkins, though I ought to have been received with thunders of applause; for I whined, ranted, and offered all sorts of violence to nature's modesty: nay, I went so far as to clench my fist at the heroine of the piece; in a word, I adopted the conceptions of all the great performers; and yet that same audience condemned by bell, book, and candle in me, what was thought to be the first style of playing in them. Such is the force of prejudice! So that, being no favourite with the pit, and not having wherewithal to insinuate myself into the good graces of the manager, I am on my return to Zamora. There we shall all huddle together again, my wife and my fellow comedians, who are making but little of the business. I wish we may not be obliged to beg our way out of town; a catastrophe of too frequent occurrence!

At these words, up rose the stage-struck hero, slung across him his knapsack and his sword, and made his exit with due theatric pomp: Farewell, gentlemen; may all the gods shower all their bounties on your heads! And you, answered Diego with corresponding emphasis, may you find your wife at Zamora, softened down in her relentless virtue, and in comfortable keeping. No sooner had Signor Zapata turned upon his heel, than he began gesticulating and spouting as he went along. The barber and myself immediately began hissing, to remind him of his first appearance at Madrid. The goose grated harsh upon his tympanum; he took it for a repetition of signals from his old friends. But looking behind him, and seeing that we were diverting ourselves at his expense, far from taking offence at this merry conceit of ours, he joined with good humour in the joke, and went his way laughing as hard as he could. On our part, we returned the compliment in

kind. After this, we got again into the high road, and pursued our journey.

CHAPTER IX

THE MEETING OF DIEGO WITH HIS FAMILY; THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIFE; GREAT REJOICINGS ON THE OCCASION; THE PARTING SCENE BETWEEN HIM AND GIL BLAS

We stopped for the night at a little village between Moyados and Valpuesta; I have forgotten the name: and the next morning, about eleven, we reached the plain of Olmédo. Signor Gil Blas, said my companion, behold my native place. So natural are these local attachments, that I can hardly contain myself at the sight of it. Signor Diego, answered I, a man of so patriotic a soul as you profess to be, might, methinks, have been a little more florid in his descriptions. Olmédo looks like a city at this distance, and you called it a village; it cannot be anything less than a corporate town. I beg its township's pardon, replied the barber; but you are to know that after Madrid, Toledo, Saragossa, and all the other large cities I have passed through in my tour of Spain, these little ones are mere villages to me. As we got further on the plain, there appeared to be a great concourse of people about Olmédo: so that, when we were near enough to distinguish objects, we were in no want of food for speculation.

There were three tents pitched at some distance from each other; and hard by, a bevy of cooks and scullions preparing an entertainment. Here a party was laying covers on long tables set out under the tents; there a detachment was crowning the pitchers of Tellus with the gifts of Bacchus. The right wing was making the pots boil, the left was turning the spits and basting the meat. But what caught my attention more than all the rest, was a temporary stage of respectable dimensions. It was furnished with pasteboard scenes, painted in a tawdry style, and the proscenium was decorated with Greek and Latin mottos. No sooner did the barber spy out these inscriptions, than he said to me—All these Greek words smell strongly of my uncle Thomas's lamp. I would lay a wager he has a hand in them, for between ourselves, he is a man

of parts and learning. He knows all the classics by heart. If he would keep them to himself it would be very well, but he is always quoting them in company, and that people do not like. But then to be sure he has a right, because this uncle of mine has translated ever so many of the Latin poets and hard Greek authors with his own hand and pen. He has got all antiquity at his fingers' ends, as you may know by his ingenious and profound criticisms. If it had not been for him, we might never have learned that the Athenian schoolboys cried when they were flogged; we owe that fact in the history of education to his fundamental knowledge of the subject.

After my fellow-traveller and myself had looked about us, we had a mind to inquire what these preparations were for. Going about on the hunt, Diego recognized in the manager Signor Thomas de la Fuenta, to whom we made up with great eagerness. The schoolmaster did not recollect the young barber at first, such a difference had ten years made. But when convinced of his being his own flesh and blood, he gave him a cordial embrace, and said with much appearance of kindness—Ah! here you are, Diego, my dear nephew, here you are, restored after your wanderings to your native land. You come to revisit your household gods, your Penates, and heaven delivers you back safe and sound into the bosom of your family. Oh happy day, happy in all the proportions of arithmetic! A day worthy to be marked with a white stone and inserted among the Fasti! We have annals in abundance for you, my friend; your uncle Pedro, the poetaster, has fallen a sacrifice at the shrine of Pluto: to speak to the comprehension of the vulgar, he has been dead these three months. That miser, in his lifetime, was afraid of wanting necessaries—*Argenti pallebat amore.* Though the great were heaping wealth upon his head, his annual expenditure did not amount to ten pistoles. He had but one miserable attendant, and him he starved. This crazy fellow, more wrong-headed than the Grecian Aristippus, who ordered his slaves to leave all their costly baggage in the heart of Lybia, as an incumbrance on their march, heaped up all the gold and silver he could scrape together. And to what end? for those very heirs whom he refused to acknowledge. He died worth thirty thousand ducats, shared between your father, your uncle Bertrand, and my-

telf. We shall be able to do very well for our children. My brother Nicholas has already married off your sister Theresa to the son of a magistrate in this place—*Connubio junxit stabili propriamque dicavit.* These very hymeneals, greeted auspiciously by all the nuptial powers, have we been celebrating for these two days with all this pomp and luxury. These tents in the plain are of our pitching. Pedro's three heirs have each a booth of his own, and we defray the expenses of the day alternately. I wish you had come sooner, you might have seen the whole progress of our festivities. The day before yesterday, the wedding-day, your father gave his treat. It was a superb entertainment, succeeded by running at the ring. Your uncle, the mercer, regaled us yesterday with a fête champêtre, and paid the piper handsomely. There were ten of the best grown boys, and ten young girls, dressed out in pastoral weeds; all the frippery in his shop was brought out to prank them up. This assemblage of Ganymedes and Houris ran through all the mazes of the dance, and warbled forth a thousand tender and spirit-stirring lays. And yet, though nothing was ever more genteel, the effect was not thought striking; but that must be owing to the bad taste of the spectators, the simplicity of pastoral is lost upon the present age.

To-day, the wheels are greased by your humble servant, and I mean to present the burgesses of Olmédo with a pageant of my own invention—*Finis coronabit opus.* I have got a stage erected, on which, God willing, shall be represented by my scholars a piece of my own composing, entitled and called—*The Amusements of Muley Bugentuf, King of Morocco.* It will be played to perfection, for my pupils declaim like the players of Madrid. They are lads of family at Penafiel and Segovia, boarders with me. They know how to touch the passions! To be sure they have rehearsed under my tuition; their emphasis will seem as if struck in the mint of their master—*ut ita dicam.* With respect to the piece I shall not say a word about it, you shall be taken by surprise. I shall simply state that it must produce a deep impression on the audience. It is one of those tragic subjects which harrow up the soul, by images of death presented to the senses in all their fearful forms. I am of Aristotle's mind, terror is a principal engine. Oh! if I had written for the stage, I would have introduced

none but bloody tyrants, and death-dispensing heroes. Not all the perfumes of Arabia should have sweetened this blood-polluted hand, I would have been up to my elbows in gore. There would have been tragedy with a vengeance; principal characters! ay, guards and attendants, should all have been sprawling together. I would have butchered every man of them, and the prompter into the bargain. In a word, I refine upon Aristotle, and border on the horrible, that is my taste. These plays to tear a cat in, are the only things for popularity; the actors live merrily on their own dying speeches, and the authors roll in luxury on the devastation of mankind.

Just as this harangue was over, we saw a great crowd of both sexes coming out of town into the plain. Who should it be but the new-married couple, attended by their families and friends, with ten or twelve musicians in the van, producing a most obstreperous din of harmony. We went up to them, and Diego introduced himself. Peals of congratulations were immediately rung through the assembly, and every one was eager to shake him by the hand. He had enough upon his shoulders to receive all their fraternal embraces. Relations and strangers all were for having a pull at him. At length his father said—You are welcome, Diego. You find your kinsmen living upon the fat of the land, my friend. I shall say no more at present, a nod is as good as a wink. Meanwhile the company went forward upon the plain, took their stations under the tents, and sat down to table. I kept close to my companion, and we both dined with the happy couple, who appeared to be suitably matched. The meal was not soon over, for the schoolmaster had the vanity to give three courses, for the purpose of cutting out his brothers, who had not been so magnificent in their hospitalities.

After the banquet, all the guests expressed their longing to see Signor Thomas's play, not doubting but the performance of so extraordinary a genius would deserve all their ears. We came in front of the stage; the musicians had taken possession of the orchestra, for the overture and act-tunes. While every one was waiting in profound silence for the rising of the curtain, the actors appeared on the boards; and the author, with the piece in his hand, sat down at the wing, in the prompter's place. Well might

he call it a tragedy, for in the first act the King of Morocco, by way of diversion, shot an hundred Moorish slaves with arrows; in the second he beheaded thirty Portuguese officers, taken prisoners by one of his captains: and in the third and last, this monarch, surfeited with long-indulged libertinism, set fire with his own hands to the seraglio where his wives were confined, and reduced it to ashes with its inhabitants. The Moorish slaves, as well as the Portuguese officers, were puppets on a very curious construction; and the palace, built of pasteboard, looked very naturally in flames by means of an artificial firework. This conflagration, accompanied by a thousand piercing cries, issuing from the ruins, concluded the piece, and the curtain dropped upon this amiable entertainment. The whole plain resounded with the applause of this fine tragedy; which spoke for the good taste of the poet, and proved that he knew where to look out for a subject.

I did not suppose there was anything more to be seen after *The Amusements of Muley Bugentuf*, but I was mistaken. Kettle-drums and trumpets announced a new exhibition—the distribution of prizes—for Thomas de la Fuenta, to give additional solemnity to his olympics, had made all his boys, as well day-scholars as boarders, write exercises; and on this occasion he was to give to those who had succeeded best, books bought at Segovia out of his own pocket. All at once were brought upon the stage two long forms out of the school, with a press full of old worm-eaten books in fine new bindings. At this signal all the actors returned upon the stage, and took their places round Signor Thomas, who looked as big as the head of a college. He had a sheet of paper in his hand, with the names of the successful candidates. This he gave to the King of Morocco, who began calling over the list with an authoritative voice. Each scholar, answering to his name, went humbly to receive a book from the hands of the bum-jerker; after this he was crowned with laurel, and seated on one of the two benches to be exposed to the gaze of the admiring company. Yet, desirous as the schoolmaster might be to send the spectators away in good humour, he brought his eggs to a bad market; for, having distributed almost all the prizes to the boarders, according to the usual etiquette

of pedagogues, that those who pay most must necessarily be the cleverest fellows, the mammas of certain day-scholars caught fire at this instance of partiality, and fell foul of the disciplinarian thereupon: so that the festival, hitherto so much to the glory of the donor, seemed likely to have ended to the same tune as the carousal of the Lapithæ.

BOOK THE THIRD

CHAPTER I

THE ARRIVAL OF GIL BLAS AT MADRID. HIS FIRST PLACE THERE

I MADE some stay with the young barber. At my departure, I met with a traveller of Segovia passing through Olmédo. He was returning with four mules from a trading expedition to Valladolid, and took me by way of back carriage. We got acquainted on the road, and he took such a fancy to me that nothing would serve him but I must be his guest at Segovia. He gave me free quarters for two days, and when he found me determined to leave him for Madrid under convoy of a muleteer, he troubled me with a letter, begging me to deliver it in person according to the superscription, without hinting that it was a letter of recommendation. I was punctual in calling on Signor Matheo Melendez. He was a woollen-draper, living at the gate of the Sun, at the corner of Trunkmaker street. No sooner had he broken the cover and read the contents, than he said with an air of complacency—Signor Gil Blas, my correspondent, Pedro Palacio, has written to me so pressingly in your favour, that I cannot do otherwise than offer you a bed at my house; moreover, he desires me to find you a good master, and I undertake the commission with pleasure. I have no doubt of suiting you to a hair.

I embraced the offer of Melendez the more gratefully because my funds were getting much below par; but I was not long a burden on his hospitality. At the week's end, he told me that he had mentioned my name to a gentleman of his

acquaintance, who wanted a valet-de-chambre, and, according to present appearances, the place would not be long vacant. In fact, this gentleman happened to make his appearance in the very nick—Sir, said Melendez, pushing me forward, you see before you the young man as by former advice. He is a pupil of honour and integrity. I can answer for him as if he was one of my own family. The gentleman looked at me with attention, said that my face was in my favour, and hired me at once. He has nothing to do but to follow me, added he, I will put him into the routine of his employment. At these words he wished the tradesman good morning, and took me into the High-street, directly over against St Philip's church. We went into a very handsome house, of which he occupied one wing; then going up five or six steps, he took me into a room secured by strong double doors, with an iron grate between. From this room we went into another, with a bed and other furniture, rather neat than gaudy.

If my new master had examined me closely, I had all my wits about me as well as he. He was a man on the wrong side of fifty, with a saturnine and serious air. His temper seemed to be even, and I thought no harm of him. He asked me several questions about my family; and liking my answers—Gil Blas, said he, I take you to be a very sensible lad, and am well pleased to have you in my service. On your part, you shall have no reason to complain. I will give you six rials a day board wages, besides vails. Then I require no great attendance, for I keep no table, but always dine out. You will only have to brush my clothes, and be your own master for the rest of the day. Only take care to be at home early in the evening, and to be in waiting at the door, that is your chief duty. After this lecture, he took six rials out of his purse, and gave them to me as earnest. We then went out, he locked the doors after him, and taking care of the keys—My friend, said he, you need not go with me, follow the devices of your own heart; but on my return this evening, let me find you on that staircase. With this injunction he left me to dispose of myself as seemed best in my own eyes.

In good sooth, Gil Blas, said I in a soliloquy, you have got a jewel of a master. What! fall in with an employer to give you six rials a day for wiping off the dust from

his clothes, and putting his room to rights in the morning, with the liberty of walking about and taking your pleasure like a schoolboy in the holidays! By my troth! it is a place of ten thousand. No wonder I was in a hurry to get to Madrid, it was doubtless some mysterious boding of good fortune prepared for me. I spent the day in the streets, diverting myself with gaping at novelties—a busy occupation. In the evening, after supping at an ordinary not far from our house, I squatted myself down in the corner pointed out by my master. He came three quarters of an hour after me, and seemed pleased with my punctuality. Very well, said he, this is right, I like attentive servants. At these words, he opened the doors of his apartment, and closed them upon us again as soon as we had gone in. As we had no candle, he took his tinder-box and struck a light. I then helped him to undress. When he was in bed, I lighted, by his order, a lamp in his chimney, and carried the wax-light into the antechamber, where I lay in a press-bed without curtains. He got up the next day between nine and ten o'clock; I brushed his clothes. He paid me my six rials, and sent me packing till the evening. My mysterious master went out himself too, not without great caution in fastening the doors, and we parted for the remainder of the day.

Such was our course of life, very agreeable to me. The best of the joke was, that I did not know my master's name. Melendez did not know it himself. The gentleman came to his shop now and then, and bought a piece of cloth. My neighbours were as much at a loss as myself; they all assured me that my master was a perfect stranger, though he had lived two years in the ward. He visited no soul in the neighbourhood, and some of them, a little given to scandal, concluded him to be no better than he should be. Suspicions got to be more rife; he was suspected of being a spy of Portugal, and it was thought but fair play to give a hint for my own good. This intimation troubled me. Thought I to myself, should this turn out to be a fact, I stand a chance for seeing the inside of a prison at Madrid. My innocence will be no security; my past ill-usage makes me look on justice with antipathy. Twice have I experienced that if the innocent are not condemned in a lump with the guilty, at least the rights of hospitality are too

little regarded in their persons to make it pleasant to pass a summer in the purlieus of the law.

I consulted Melendez in so delicate a conjuncture. He was at a loss how to advise me. Though he could not bring himself to believe that my master was a spy, he had no reason to be confident on the other side of the question. I determined to watch my employer, and to leave him if he turned out to be an enemy of the state; but then prudence and personal comfort required me to be certain of my fact. I began, therefore, to pry into his actions; and to sound him, Sir, said I one evening while he was undressing, I do not know how one ought to live so as to be secure from reflections. The world is very scurrilous! We, among others, have neighbours not worth a curse. Sad dogs! You have no notion how they talk of us. Do they indeed, Gil Blas? quoth he. Be it so! but what can they say of us, my friend? Ah! truly, replied I, evil tongues never want a whet. Virtue herself furnishes weapons for her own martyrdom. Our neighbours say that we are dangerous people, that we ought to be looked after by government; in a word, you are taken for a spy of Portugal. In throwing out this hint I looked hard at my master, just as Alexander squinted at his physician, and pursed up all my penetration to remark upon the effect of my intelligence. There seemed to be a hitch in the muscles of my mysterious lord, altogether in unison with the suspicions of the neighbourhood; and he fell into a brown study, which bore no very auspicious interpretation. However, he put a better face on the matter, and said with sufficient composure: Gil Blas, leave our neighbours to discourse as they please, but let not our repose depend on their judgments. Never mind what they think of us, provided our own consciences do not wince.

Hereupon he went to bed, and I did the like, without knowing what course to take. The next day, just as we were on the point of going out in the morning, we heard a violent knocking at the outer door on the staircase. My master opened the inner, and looked through the grate. A well-dressed man said to him: Please your honour, I am an alguazil, come to inform you that Mr Corregidor wishes to speak a word with you. What does he want? answered my pattern of secrecy. That is more than I know, sir,

replied the alguazil; but you have only to go and wait on him; you will soon be informed. I am his most obedient, quoth my master; I have no business with him. At the tail of this speech, he banged the inner door; then, after walking up and down a little while, like one who pondered on the discourse of the alguazil, he put my six rials into my hand, and said: Gil Blas, you may go out, my friend; for my part, I shall stay at home a little longer, but have no occasion for you. He made an impression on my mind, by these words, that he was afraid of being taken up, and was therefore obliged to remain in his apartments. I left him there; and, to see how far my suspicions were founded, hid myself in a place whence I could see if he went out. I should have had patience to have staid there all the morning, if he had not saved me the trouble. But an hour after, I saw him walk the street with an ease and confidence which dumb-founded my sagacity. Yet far from yielding to these appearances, I mistrusted them; for my verdict went to condemnation. I considered his easy carriage as put on; and his staying at home as a finesse to secure his gold and jewels, when probably he was going to consult his safety by speedy flight. I had no idea of seeing him again, and doubted whether I should attend at his door in the evening; so persuaded was I, that the day would see him on the outside of the city, as his only refuge from impending danger. Yet I kept my appointment; when, to my extreme surprise, my master returned as usual. He went to bed without betraying the least uneasiness, and got up the next morning with the same composure.

Just as he had finished dressing, another knock at the door! My master looked through the grate. His friend the alguazil was there again, and he asked him what he wanted. Open the door, answered the alguazil; here is Mr Corregidor. At this dreadful name, my blood froze in my veins. I had a devilish loathing of those gentry since I had passed through their hands, and could have wished myself at that moment an hundred leagues from Madrid. As for my employer, less startled than myself, he opened the door, and received the magistrate respectfully. You see, said the corregidor, that I do not break in upon you with a whole posse: my maxim is to do business in a quiet way. In spite of the ugly reports circulated about you in the city

I think you deserve some little attention. What is your name, and business at Madrid? Sir, answered my master, I am from New Castile, and my title is Don Bernard de Castil Blazo. With respect to my way of life, I lounge about, frequent public places, and take my daily pleasure in a select circle of polite company. Of course you have a handsome fortune! replied the judge. No, sir, interrupted my Mecenas, I have neither annuities, nor lands, nor houses. How do you live then? rejoined the corregidor. I will show you, replied Don Bernard. At the same time he lifted up a part of the hangings, before a door I had not observed, opened that and one beyond, then took the magistrate into a closet containing a large chest chuck full of gold.

Sir, said he again, you know that the Spaniards are proverbially indolent; yet, whatever may be their general dislike to labour, I may compliment myself on bettering the example. I have a stock of laziness, which disqualifies me for all exertion. If I had a mind to puff my vices into virtues, I might call this sloth of mine a philosophical indifference, the work of a mind weaned from all that worldlings court with so much ardour; but I will frankly own myself constitutionally lazy, and so lazy, that rather than work for my subsistence, I would lay myself down and starve. Therefore, to lead a life befitting my fancy, not to have the trouble of looking after my affairs, and above all to do without a steward, I have converted all my patrimony, consisting of several considerable estates, into ready money. In this chest there are fifty thousand ducats; more than enough for the remainder of my days, should I live to be an hundred! For I do not spend a thousand a year, and am already more than fifty years old. I have no fears, therefore, for futurity, since I am not addicted, heaven be praised, to any one of the three things which usually ruin men. I care little for the pleasures of the table; I only play for my amusement; and I have given up women. There is no chance of my being reckoned, in my old age, among those libidinous grey-beards to whom jilts sell their favours by troy weight.

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You are a happy man! said the corregidor. They are in the wrong to suspect you of being a spy: that office is quite out of character for a man like you. Take your own

course, Don Bernard: continue to live as you like. Far from disturbing your peace, I declare myself your protector; I request your friendship, and pledge my own. Ah! sir, exclaimed my master, thrilled with these kind expressions, I accept with equal joy and gratitude your precious offer. In giving me your friendship you augment my wealth, and carry my happiness to its height. After this conversation, which the alguazil and myself heard from the closet door, the corregidor took his leave of Don Bernard, who could not do enough to express his sense of the obligation. On my part, mimicking my master in doing the honours of the house, I overburdened the alguazil with civilities. I made him a thousand low bows, though I felt for him in my sleeve the contempt and hatred which every honest man naturally entertains for an alguazil.

CHAPTER II

THE ASTONISHMENT OF GIL BLAS AT MEETING CAPTAIN ROLANDO IN MADRID, AND THAT ROBBER'S CURIOUS NARRATIVE

Don Bernard de Castil Blazo, having attended the corregidor to the street, returned in a hurry to fasten his strong box, and all the doors which secured it. We then went out, both of us well satisfied, he at having acquired a friend in power, and myself at finding my six rials a day secured to me. The desire of relating this adventure to Melendez made me bend my steps towards his house; but, near my journey's end, whom should I meet but Captain Rolando! My surprise was extreme, and I could not help quaking at the sight of him. He recollected me at once, accosted me gravely, and, still keeping up his tone of superiority, ordered me to follow him. I tremblingly obeyed, saying inwardly: Alas! he means, doubtless, to make me pay my debts! Whither will he lead me? There may, perhaps, be some subterraneous retreat in this city. Plague take it! If I thought so, I would soon show him I have not got the gout. I walked, therefore, behind him carefully looking out where he might stop, with the pious design of putting my best leg foremost, if there was anything in the shape of a trap-door.

Rolando soon dispersed my alarms. He went into a well-frequented tavern; I followed him. He called for the best wine, and ordered dinner. While it was getting ready, we went into a private room, where the captain addressed me as follows: You may well be astonished, Gil Blas, to renew your acquaintance with your old commander; and you will be still more so, when you have heard my tale. The day I left you in the cave, and went with my troop to Mansilla, for the purpose of selling the mules and horses we had taken the evening before, we met the son of the corregidor of Leon, attended by four men on horseback well armed, following his carriage. Two of his people we made to bite the dust, and the other two ran away. On this the coachman, alarmed for his master, cried out to us in a tone of supplication—Alas! my dear gentlemen, in God's name, do not kill the only son of his worship the corregidor of Leon. These words were far from softening my comrades; on the contrary, their fury knew no bounds. Good folks, said one of them, let not the son of a mortal enemy to men like us escape our vengeance. How many ornaments of our profession has his father cut off in their prime! Let us repay his cruelty with interest, and sacrifice this victim to their offended ghosts. The whole troop applauded the fineness of this feeling, and my lieutenant himself was preparing to act as high priest at this unhallowed altar, when I interdicted the rites. Stop, said I; why shed blood without occasion? Let us rest contented with the youth's purse. As he makes no resistance, it would be against the laws of war to cut his throat. Besides, he is not answerable for his father's misdeeds; nay, his father only does his duty in condemning us to death, as we do ours in rifling travellers.

Thus did I plead for the corregidor's son, and my intercession was not unavailing. We only took every farthing of his money, and carried off with us the horses of the two men whom we had slain. These we sold with the rest at Mansilla. Thence we returned to the cavern, where we arrived the following morning a little before daybreak. We were not a little surprised to find the trap open, and still more so, when we found Leonarda handcuffed in the kitchen. She unravelled the mystery in two words. We wondered how you could have overreached us; no one could have thought you capable of serving us such a trick, and we

forgave the effect for the merit of the invention. As soon as we had released our kitchen wench, I gave orders for a good luncheon. In the mean time we went to look after our horses in the stable, where the old negro, who had been left to himself for four-and-twenty hours, was at the last gasp. We did all we could for his relief, but he was too far gone; indeed so much reduced, that, in spite of our endeavours, we left the poor devil on the threshold of another world. It was very sad; but it did not spoil our appetites, and, after an abundant breakfast, we retired to our chambers, and slept away the whole day. On our awakening, Leonarda apprized us that Domingo had paid the debt of nature. We carried him to the charnel-house where you may recollect to have lodged, and there performed his obsequies, just as if he had been one of our own order.

Five or six days afterwards, it fell out that one morning, on a sally, we encountered three companies of the Holy Brotherhood, on the outskirts of the wood. They seemed waiting to attack us. We perceived but one troop at first. These we despised, though superior in number to our party, and rushed forward to the onset. But while we were at loggerheads with the first, the two others in ambuscade came thundering down upon us; so that our valour was of no use. There was no withstanding such a host of enemies. Our lieutenant and two of our gang gave up the ghost on this occasion. As for the two others and myself, we were so closely pressed and hemmed in, as to be taken prisoners: and, while two detachments convoyed us to Leon, the third went to destroy our retreat. How it was discovered, I will briefly tell you. A peasant of Luceno, crossing the forest on his way home, by chance espied the trap-door of our subterraneous residence, which a certain young runaway had not shut down after him, for it was precisely the day when you took yourself off with the lady. He had a violent suspicion of its being our abode, without having the courage to go in. It was enough to mark the adjacent parts, by lightly peeling with his knife bark from the nearest trees, and so on, from distance to distance, till he was quite out of the wood. He then betook himself to Leon, with this grand discovery for the corregidor, who was so much the better pleased, as his son had been robbed by our gang. This magistrate collected together three com-

panies to lay hold of us, and the peasant showed them the way.

My arrival in the town of Leon was as good as that of a wild beast to the inhabitants. Even though I had been a Portuguese general made prisoner of war, the people could not have been more anxious to see me. There he goes, was the cry; that is he, the famous captain, the terror of these parts. It would serve him right to tear him piecemeal with pincers, and make his comrades join in the chorus. To the corregidor, was the universal cry; and his worship began insulting me. So, so! said he, scoundrel as you are, the powers of justice, worn to a thread with your past irregularities, hand over the task of punishment to me as their delegate. Sir, answered I, great as my crimes may have been, at least the death of your only son is not to be laid at my door. His life was saved by me; you owe me some acknowledgment on that score. Oh! wretch, exclaimed he, there are no measures to be kept with people of your description. And though it were my wish to save you, my sacred office would not allow me to indulge my feelings. Having spoken to this effect, he committed us to a dungeon, where my companions had no time to lament their hard fate. They got out of confinement, at the end of three days, to expatiate with tragic energy at the place of execution. For my part, I took up my quarters in limbo for three complete weeks. My punishment seemingly was deferred only to render it more terrible; and I was looking out for some refinement on the ordinary course of criminal justice, when the corregidor, having summoned me before him, said: Give ear to your sentence. You are free. Had it not been for you, my only son would have been assassinated on the highway. As a father, my gratitude was due for this service; but not being competent to acquit you in my capacity of a magistrate, I have written up to court in your favour; have solicited your pardon, and have obtained it. Go, then, whithersoever it may seem good to you. But take my advice; profit by this lucky escape. Look to your paths, and give up the trade of a highwayman for good and all.

I was deeply impressed by this advice, and took my departure for Madrid, in the firm determination of mending my ways, and living quietly in that city. There I found

my father and mother dead, and what they left behind them in the hands of an old kinsman, who administered duly and truly, as all trustees of course do. I saved three thousand ducats out of the fire; scarcely a quarter of what I was entitled to. But where was the remedy? There was no standing to the quirks and evasions of the law. Just to be doing something, I have purchased an alguazil's place. My colleagues would have set their faces against my admission, for the honour of the cloth, had they known my history. Luckily they did not, or at least affected not to know it, which was just as good as the reality; for, in that illustrious body, it is the bounden duty and interest of every member to wear a mask. The pot cannot call the kettle hard names, thank heaven. The devil would have no great catch in the best of us. And yet, my friend, I could willingly unbosom myself to you without disguise. My present occupation is much against the grain; it requires too circumspect and too mysterious a conduct; there is nothing to be done but by underhand dealings, gravity, and cunning. Oh! for my first trade! The new one is safer, to be sure; but there is more fun in the other, and liberty is my motto. I feel disposed to get rid of my office, and to set out some sunshiny morning for the mountains at the source of the Tagus. I know of a retreat thereabouts, inhabited by a numerous gang, composed chiefly of Catalonians; when I have said that, I need say no more. If you will go along with me, we will swell the number of those heroes. I shall be second in command. To make your footing respectable at once, I will swear that you have fought ten times by my side. Your valour shall mount to the very skies. I will tell more good of you than a commander-in-chief of a favourite officer. I will not say a word about the run-away trick, that would render you suspected of turning nose, therefore mum is the word. What say you to it? Are you ready to set off? I am impatient to know your mind.

Every one to his own fancy, said I then to Rolando, you were born for bold exploits, and your friend for a serene and quiet life. I understand you, interrupted he; the lady whom love induced you to carry off still preserves her influence over your heart, and you doubtless lead with her that serene life of which you are enamoured. Own the

truth, Master Gil Blas, she is become a thing of your own, and you are both living on the pistoles carried off from the subterraneous retreat. I told him he was mistaken; and, to set him right, related the lady's adventures and my own while we sat at dinner. When our meal was finished he led back to the subject of the Catalonians, and attempted once more to engage me in his project. But finding me inflexible, he looked at me with a terrific frown, and said seriously—Since you are dastard enough to prefer your servile condition to the honour of enlisting in a troop of brave fellows, I turn you adrift to your own grovelling inclinations. But mark me well, a lapse may be fatal. Forget our meeting of to-day, and never prate about me to any living soul; for if I catch you bandying about my name in your idle talk . . . . you know my ways, I need say no more. With these words he called for the landlord, paid the reckoning, and we rose from table to to go away.

CHAPTER III

GIL BLAS IS DISMISSED BY DON BERNARD DE CASTIL BLAZO, AND ENTERS INTO THE SERVICE OF A BEAU

As we were coming out of the tavern, and taking our leave, my master was passing along the street. He saw me, and I observed him look more than once at the captain. I had no doubt but he was surprised at meeting me in such company. It is certain that Rolando's physiognomy and air were not much in favour of moral qualities. He was a gigantic fellow, with a long face, a parrot's beak, and a very rascally contour, without being absolutely ugly.

I was not mistaken in my guess. In the evening I found Don Bernard harping on the Captain's figure, and charmingly disposed to believe all the fine things I could have said of him, if my tongue had not been tied. Gil Blas, said he, who is that great shark I saw with you a while ago? I told him it was an alguazil, and thought to have got off with that answer, but he returned to the charge; and observing my confusion, from the remembrance of the threats used by Rolando, broke off the conversation abruptly and went to bed. The next morning, when I had performed my

ordinary duties, he counted me over six ducats instead of six rials, and said—Here, my friend, this is what I give you for your services up to this day. Go and look out for another place. A servant keeping such high company is too much for me. I bethought myself of saying, in my own defence, that I had known that alguazil, by having prescribed for him at Valladolid, while I was practising medicine. Very good, replied my master, the shift is ingenious enough; you might have thought of it last night, and not have looked so foolish. Sir, rejoined I, in good truth prudence kept me silent, and gave to my reserve the aspect of guilt. Undoubtedly, resumed he, tapping me softly on the shoulder, it was carrying prudence very far, even to the confines of cunning. Go, lad, I have no further occasion for your services.

I went immediately to acquaint Melendez with the bad news, who told me, for my comfort, that he would engage to procure me a better berth. Indeed, some days after, he said—Gil Blas, my friend, you have no notion of the good luck in store for you. You will have the most agreeable post in the world. I am going to settle you with Don Matthias de Silva. He is a man of the first fashion, one of those young noblemen commonly distinguished by the appellation of beaus. I have the honour of his custom. He takes up goods of me, on tick, indeed, but these great men are good pay in the long run, they often marry rich heiresses, and then old scores are wiped off; or, should that fail, a tradesman who understands his business puts such a price upon his articles, that if three-fourths of his debts are bad, he is no loser. Don Matthias's steward is my intimate friend. Let us go and look for him. It will be for him to present you to his master, and you may rely upon it, that for my sake he will treat you with high consideration.

As we were on our way to Don Matthias's house, this honest shopkeeper said—It is fit, methinks, that you should be let into the steward's character. His name is Gregorio Rodriguez. Between ourselves, he is a man of low birth, with a talent for intrigue, in which vocation he has laboured till a stewardship in two distressed families completed their ruin, and made his fortune. I give you notice, that his vanity is excessive; he loves to see the under-servants creeping and crawling at his feet. It is with him they must

make interest if they have any favour to beg of their master, for should they happen to obtain it without his interference, he has always some shift or other at hand to get the boon revoked, or at least render it of no avail. Regulate your conduct on this hint, Gil Blas; pay court to Signor Rodriguez in preference to your master himself, and leave no stone unturned to get into his good graces. His friendship will be of material service to you. He will pay your wages to the day; and, if you have management enough to worm yourself into his confidence, you may chance to pick up some of the fragments which fall from his table. There are enough for an hungrier dog than you! Don Matthias is a young nobleman, with no thought to throw away but on his pleasures, nor the slightest suspicion how his own affairs are going on. What a house for a steward who knows how to be a steward!

When we got to our journey's end, we asked to speak with Signor Rodriguez. We were told that we should find him in his own apartment. There he was, sure enough, and with him a clownish sort of fellow holding a blue bag, full of money. The steward, looking more wan and yellow than a girl in a hurry for a husband, ran up to Melendez with open arms; the draper was not behindhand with him, and they each hugged the other with a show of friendship, at least as much indebted to art as nature for its plausible effect. After this, the next question was about me. Rodriguez examined me from top to toe; saying very civilly at the same time that I was just such an one as Don Matthias wanted, and that he would with pleasure take upon himself to present me to that nobleman. Thereupon Melendez gave him to understand how deeply he was interested in my behalf; he begged the steward to take me under his protection, and leaving me with him, after plenty of compliments, withdrew. As soon as he was gone out, Rodriguez said, I will introduce you to my master the moment I have dispatched this honest husbandman. He called the countryman to him forthwith, and taking his bag, Talego, said he, let us see if the five hundred pistoles are all right. He counted over the money himself. As the sum was found to be exact, the countryman took a receipt and went away. The cash was put back again into the bag. It was my turn next to be attended to. We may now, said

my new patron, go to my master's levee. He usually gets up about noon, it is now near one o'clock, and must be daylight in his apartment.

Don Matthias had indeed just risen. He was still in his morning gown, kicking his heels in a great chair, with a leg tossed over one of the elbows, swinging backwards and forwards, and manufacturing his own snuff. His conversation was addressed to a footman in waiting, who officiated as a temporary valet-de-chambre. My lord, said the steward, here is a young man whom I take the liberty of presenting to your lordship in the place of him you discharged the day before yesterday. Your draper, Melendez, has given him a character; he undertakes for his qualifications, and I believe you will be very well pleased with him. That is enough, answered the young nobleman, since he has your recommendation, I adopt him blindfold into my retinue. He is my valet-de-chambre at once; that business is settled. Let us talk of other matters, Rodriguez, you are come just in time, I was going to send for you. I have a budget of bad news, my dear Rodriguez. I played with ill luck last night, an hundred pistoles in my pocket lost, and two hundred more on credit. You know how indispensable it is for persons of high rank to pay their debts of honour. As for any other, it is no matter when they are paid. Punctuality is all very well between one tradesman and another, but they cannot expect it from one of us. These two hundred pistoles must be raised forthwith and sent to the Countess de Pedrosa. Sir, quoth the steward, that is sooner said than done. Where, prythee, am I to get such a sum? Threaten as I will, I never touch a marvedi from your tenants. And yet your establishment is to be kept up in style, and I am wearing myself to a thread in furnishing the ways and means. It is true that hitherto, heaven be praised, we have rubbed on, but what witch to conjure for a wind now, I know not, the case is desperate. All this prosing is extremely impertinent, interrupted Don Matthias; this counting house talk makes me hideously nervous. So, then, Rodriguez, you really think to undertake my reform, and metamorphose me into a plodding manager of my own estates? A very elegant sort of pastime for a man in my station of life; a man of rank and fashion! Grant me patience, replied the steward; at the rate we are

driving now, it is easily calculated how soon you will be released from all those cares. You are a very great bore, resumed the young nobleman rather peevishly, this brutal importunity is downright murder to one's feelings. I hate loud music, be so good as to let me be ruined *pianissimo*. I tell you I want two hundred pistoles, and I must have them. Why, then, said Rodriguez, we must have recourse to the old rascal who has lent you so much already on usurious terms. Have recourse to the devil, if he will do you any good, answered Don Matthias; only let me have two hundred pistoles, and it is the same thing to me how you manage to get them.

While he was uttering these words in a hasty and fretful tone, the steward went out: and Don Antonio Centellés, a young man of quality, came in. What is the matter, my friend? said this last to my master: your atmosphere is overcast; I trace passion in the lines of your countenance. Who can have ruffled that sweet temper? I would lay a wager, it was that booby just gone out. Yes, answered Don Matthias, he is my steward. Every time he comes to speak to me, I am in an agony for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. He rings the changes on the state of my affairs; and tells me that I am spending principal and interest . . . . A beast! He will say next, that I have ruined him into the bargain! My dear fellow, replied Don Antonio, I am exactly in the same situation. My man of business is just such another scarecrow as your steward. When the sneaking scoundrel, after repeated demands, brings me some niggardly supply, it is just as if he was lending me his own. He expostulates most barbarously. Sir, says he, you are going to rack and ruin; there is an execution out against you. I am obliged to cut him short, and beg him to remonstrate in epitome. The worst of it is, said Don Matthias, that there is no doing without these fellows; they are the penance attached to our elegant indiscretions. Just so, replied Centellés. . . . But listen, pursued he, bursting into a fit of laughter; a pleasant idea has just struck me. Nothing was ever more farcically fancied. We may introduce a *buffo caricato* into our serious opera, and relieve the knell of our departed goods and chattels with an humorous divertisement. The plot is thus: let me try to borrow from your steward whatever you want. You shall

do the same with my man of business. Then let them both preach as they please; we shall hearken with the utmost composure. Your steward will come and open his case to me; my man of business will plead the poverty of the land to you. I shall hear of nothing but your extravagance; and you will see your own in mine as in a glass. It will be vastly entertaining.

A thousand brilliant conceits followed this flight of genius, and put the young patricians into high spirits, so that they kept up the ball with vivacity, if not with wit. Their conversation was interrupted by Gregorio Rodriguez, who brought back with him a little old man with a bald head. Don Antonio was for moving off. Farewell, Don Matthias, said he, we shall meet again anon. I leave you with these gentlemen; you have, doubtless, some state affairs to discuss in council. Oh! no, no, answered my master, you had better stop; you will not interrupt us. This warm old gentleman has the moderation to lend me money at twenty per cent. What! at twenty per cent.! exclaimed Centellés in a tone of astonishment. In good truth! I wish you joy on being in such hands. I do not come off so cheaply, for my part: I pay through the nose for every farthing I get. My loans are generally raised at double that per cent. There is usury! said the father of the usurious tribe; unconscionable dogs! Where do they expect to go when they die? I do not wonder there is so strong a prejudice against money-lenders. It is the exorbitant profit which some of them derive from their discounts, that brings reproach and ill-will upon us all. If all my brethren of the blue balls were like me, we should not be treated so scurvily; for my part, I only lend to do my duty towards my neighbour. Ah! if times were as good now as in my early days, my purse should be at your service as a friend; and even now, in the present distress of the money-market, it goes against the grain to take a poor twenty per cent. But one would think the money was all gone back to the mines whence it came: there is no such thing to be had, and the scarcity compels me to depart a little from the disinterested severity of my benevolence. How much do you want? pursued he, addressing my master. Two hundred pistoles, answered Don Matthias. I have four hundred here in a bag, replied the usurer; it is only to give you half of them. At

the same time he drew from underneath his cloak a blue bag, looking just like that in which farmer Talego had left five hundred pistoles with Rodriguez. I was not long in forming my judgment of the matter, and saw plainly that Melendez had not bragged without reason of the steward's aptness in the ways of the world. The old man emptied the bag, displayed the cash on a table, and set about counting it. The sight set all my master's extravagant passions in a flame; the sum total proved very striking to his comprehension. Signor Descomulgado, said he to the usurer, I have just made a very sensible reflection: I am a great fool. I only borrow enough to redeem my credit, without thinking of my empty pockets. I should be obliged to give you the trouble of coming again to-morrow. I think, therefore, it will be best to spare your age and infirmities, and ease you of the four hundred at once. My lord, answered the old man, I had destined half of this money to a good licentiate, who lays out the income of his large preferments in those pious and charitable uses for which they were originally given to the clergy, as stewards of the poor, and guides to the young and unwary. In pursuance of this end, it is his great delight to wean young girls from the seductions of a wicked world, and place them in a snug well-furnished little box of his own, where they may be obnoxious to his ghostly admonitions by day and by night. But, since you have occasion for the whole sum, it is at your disposal. Something by way of security . . . . Oh! as for security, interrupted Rodriguez, taking a paper out of his pocket, you shall have as good as the bank. Here is a note which Signor Don Matthias has only just to sign. He makes over five hundred pistoles, due from one of his tenants, Talego, a wealthy yeoman of Mondejar. That is enough, replied the usurer, I never split hairs, but deal upon the square. The steward insinuated a pen between his master's fingers, who signed his name at the bottom of the note, without reading it; and whistled as he signed, for want of thought.

That business settled, the old man took his leave of my noble employer, who shook him cordially by the hand, saying: Till I have the pleasure of seeing you again, good master pounds, shillings, and pence, I am your most devoted humble servant. I do not know why you should all be lumped together for a set of blood-suckers; you seem to me

a necessary link in the chain of well-ordered society. You are as good as a physician to us pecuniary invalids of quality, and keep us alive by artificial restoratives in the last stage of a consumptive purse. You are in the right, exclaimed Centellés. Usurers are a very gentlemanly order in society, and I must not be denied the privilege of paying my compliments to this illustrious specimen, for the sake of his twenty per cent. With this banter, he came up and threw his arms about the old man's neck: and these two overgrown children, for their amusement, began sending him backward and forward between them like a shuttlecock. After they had tossed him about from pillar to post, they suffered him to depart with the steward, who ought to have come in for his share of the game, and for something a little more serious.

When Rodriguez and his stalking-horse had left the room, Don Matthias sent, by the lacquey in waiting, half his pistoles to the Countess de Pedrosa, and deposited the other half in a long purse worked with gold and silk, which he usually wore in his pocket. Very well pleased to find himself in cash, he said to Don Antonio, with an air of gaiety: What shall we do with ourselves to-day? Let us call a council. That is talking like a statesman, answered Centellés: I am your man: let us ponder gravely. While they were collecting their deliberative wisdom on the course they were to pursue for the day, two other noblemen came in; Don Alexo Segiar and Don Ferdinand de Gamboa; both nearly about my master's age, that is, from eight and twenty to thirty. These four jolly blades began with such hearty salutations, as if they had not met for these ten years. After that, Don Ferdinand, a professed bacchanalian, made his proposals to Don Matthias and Don Antonio: Gentlemen, said he, where do you dine to-day? If you are not engaged, I will take you to a tavern, where you shall quaff celestial liquor. I supped there last night, and did not come away till between five and six this morning. Would to heaven, exclaimed my master, I had done the same! I should not have lost my money.

For my part, said Centellés, I treated myself yesterday evening with a new amusement; for variety has always its charms for me. Nothing but a change of pleasures can make the dull round of human life supportable. One of

my friends introduced me neck and heels to one of those gentry ycleped tax-gatherers, who do the government business and their own at the same time. There was no want of magnificence, good taste, or a well-designed set out table! but I found in the family itself an highly seasoned relish of absurdity. The farmer of the revenues, though the most meanly extracted of the whole party, must set up for a great man; and his wife, though hideously ugly, was a goddess in her own estimation, and made a thousand silly speeches, the zest of which was heightened by a Biscayan accent. Add to this, that there were four or five children with their tutor at table. Judge if it must not have been an amusing family party.

As for me, gentlemen, said Don Alexo Segiar, I supped with Arsenia the actress. We were six at table: Arsenia, Florimonde, a coquet of her acquaintance, the Marquis de Zenette, Don Juan de Moncade, and your humble servant. We passed the night in drinking and talking bawdy. What a flow of soul! To be sure, Arsenia and Florimonde are not strong in their upper works; but then they have a facility in their vocation which is more than all the wit in the world. They are the dearest madcaps, gay, romping, and rampant: they are an hundred times better than your modest women of sense and discretion.

CHAPTER IV

GIL BLAS GETS INTO COMPANY WITH HIS FELLOWS; THEY SHOW HIM A READY ROAD TO THE REPUTATION OF WIT, AND IMPOSE ON HIM A SINGULAR OATH

THOSE noblemen pursued this strain of conversation, till Don Matthias, about whose person I was fiddling all the while, was ready to go out. He then told me to follow him; and this bevy of fashionables set sail together for the tavern, whither Don Ferdinand de Gamboa proposed to conduct them. I began my march in the rear rank with three other valets; for each of the gentlemen had his own. I remarked with astonishment that these three servants copied their masters, and assumed the same follies. I introduced myself as a new comer. They returned my salute in form; and

one of them, after having taken measure of me very accurately, said—Brother, I perceive, by your gait, that you have never yet lived with a young nobleman. Alas! no, answered I, neither have I been long in Madrid. So it appears, replied he, you smell strong of the country. You seem timid and embarrassed; there is a hitch in your deportment. But no matter, we will soon wear off all stiffness, take my word for it. Perhaps you think better of me than I deserve, said I. No, resumed he, no; there is no such cub as we cannot lick into shape; assure yourself of that.

This specimen was enough to convince me that I had hearty fellows for my comrades, and that I could not be in better hands to initiate me into high life below-stairs. On our arrival at the tavern, we found an entertainment ready which Signor Don Ferdinand had been so provident as to order in the morning. Our masters sat down to table, and we arranged ourselves behind their chairs. The conversation was spirited and lively. My ears tingled to hear them. Their humour, their way of thinking, their mode of expression diverted me. What fire! what sallies of imagination! They appeared like a new order of beings. With the dessert, we sat before them a great choice of the best wines in Spain, and left the room, to go to dinner in a little parlour, where our cloth was laid.

I was not long in discovering that the combatants in our lists had more to recommend them than appeared at first sight. They were not satisfied with aping the manners of their masters, but even copied their phrases; and these varlets gave such a facsimile, that bating a little vulgarity, they might have passed themselves off very well. I admired their free and easy carriage; still more was I charmed with their wit, but despaired of ever coming up to them in my own person. Don Ferdinand's servant, on the score of his master treating ours, did the honours; and, determined to do the thing genteelly, he called the landlord, and said to him—Master tapster, give us ten bottles of your very best wine; and, as you have an happy knack of doing, make the gentlemen upstairs believe that they have drank them. With all my heart, answered the landlord; but, Master Gaspard, you know that Signor Don Ferdinand owes me for a good many dinners already. If through your kind intervention I could get some little matter on account . . .

Oh! interrupted the valet, do not be at all uneasy about your debt: I will take it upon myself; put it down to me. It is true that some unmannerly creditors have preferred legal measures to a reliance on our honour; but we shall take the first opportunity of obtaining a replevy, and will pay you without looking at your bill. To have my master on your books is like so many ingots of gold. The landlord brought us the wine, in spite of unmannerly creditors; and we drank to a speedy replevy. It was as good as a comedy to see us drinking each other's health every minute, under our masters' titles. Don Antonio's servant called Don Ferdinand's plain Gamboa, and Don Ferdinand's servant called Don Antonio's Centellés: they dubbed me Silva; and we kept pace in drunkenness, under these borrowed names, with the noblemen to whom they properly belonged.

Though my wit was less conspicuous than that of the other guests, they lost no opportunity of testifying their pleasure in my acquaintance. Silva, said one of our merriest soakers, we shall make something of you, my friend. I perceive that you have wit at will, if you did but know how to draw upon it. The fear of talking absurdly prevents you from throwing out at all; and yet it is only by a bold push that a thousand people nowadays set themselves up for good companions. Do you wish to be bright? You have only to give the reins to your loquacity, and to venture indiscriminately on whatever comes uppermost: your blunders will pass for the eccentricities of genius. Though you should utter an hundred extravagancies, let but a single good joke be packed up in the bundle, the nonsense shall be all forgotten, the witticism bandied about, and your talent be puffed into high repute. This is the happy method our masters have devised, and it ought to be adopted by all new candidates. Besides that I had but too strong a wish to pass for a clever fellow, the trick they taught me appeared so easy in the performance, that it ought not to be buried in obscurity. I tried it at once, and the fumes of the wine contributed to my success; that is to say, I talked at random, and had the good luck to strike out of much absurdity some flashes of merriment, very acceptable to my audience. This first essay inspired me with confidence. I redoubled my sprightliness, to sparkle in repartee; and chance gave a successful issue to my endeavours.

Well done! said my fellow-servant who had addressed me in the street, do not you begin to shake off your rustic manners? You have not been two hours in our company, and you are quite another creature: your improvement will be visible every day. This it is to wait on people of quality. It causes an elevation, which the mind can never attain under a plebeian roof. Doubtless, answered I—and for that reason I shall henceforth dedicate my little talents to the nobility. That is bravely said, roared out Don Ferdinand's servant, half seas over, commoners are not entitled to possess such a fund of superior genius as exists in us. Come, gentlemen, let us make a vow never to colleague with any such beggarly fellows; let us swear to that by Styx. We laughed heartily at Gaspard's conceit: the proposal was received with applause: and we took this mock oath with our glasses in our hands.

Thus sat we at table till our masters were pleased to get up from it. This was at midnight; an outrageous instance of sobriety, in the opinion of my colleagues. To be sure, these noble lords left the tavern so early only to visit a celebrated wanton, lodging in the purlieus of the court, and keeping open house night and day for the votaries of pleasure. She was a woman from five and thirty to forty, still in the height of her charms, entertaining in her discourse, and so perfect a mistress in the art of pleasure, that she sold the waste and refuse of her beauty at a higher price than the first sample of the unadulterated article. She had always two or three other pieces of damaged goods in the house, who contributed not a little to the great concourse of nobility resorting thither. The afternoon was spent in play; then supper, and the night passed in drinking and making merry. Our masters staid till morning, and so did we, without thinking the time long; for, while they were toying with the mistresses, we attacked the maids. At length, we all parted when daylight peeped in on our festivities, and went to bed each of us at our separate homes.

My master getting up at his usual time, about noon, dressed himself. He went out. I followed him, and we paid a visit to Don Antonio Centellés, with whom we found one Don Alvaro de Acuna. He was an old gentleman, who gave lectures on the science of debauchery. The rising generation, if they wanted to qualify themselves for fine

gentlemen, put themselves under his tuition. He moulded their ductile habits to pleasure, taught them to make a distinguished figure in the world, and to squander their substance: he had no qualms as to running out his own, for the deed was done. After these three blades had exchanged the compliments of the morning, Centellés said to my master—In good faith, Don Matthias, you could not have come at a more lucky time. Don Alvar is come to take me with him to a dinner, given by a citizen to the Marquis de Zenette and Don Juan de Moncade; and you shall be of the party. And what is the citizen's name? said Don Matthias. Gregorio de Noriega, said Don Alvar, and I will describe the young man in two words. His father, a rich jeweller, is gone abroad, to attend the foreign markets, and left his son, at his departure, in the enjoyment of a large income. Gregorio is a blockhead, with a turn for every sort of extravagance, and an awkward hankering after the reputation of wit and fashion, in despite of nature. He has begged of me to give him a few instructions. I manage him completely; and can assure you, gentlemen, that I lead him a rare dance. His estate is rather deeply dipped already. I do not doubt it, exclaimed Centellés; I see the vulgar dog in an almshouse. Come, Don Matthias: let us honour the fellow with our acquaintance, and be in at the death of him. Willingly, answered my master, for I delight in seeing the fortune of these plebeian upstarts kicked over, when they affect to mix among us. Nothing, for instance, ever entertained me so much as the downfall of the toll-gatherer's son, whom play, and the vanity of figuring among the great, have stripped, till he has not a house over his head. Oh! as for that, replied Don Alvar, he deserves no pity, he is as great a coxcomb in his poverty as he was in his prosperity.

Centellés and my master accompanied Don Alvar to Gregorio de Noriega's party. We went there also, that is, Mogicon and myself, both in ecstasy at having an opportunity of sponging on a citizen, and pleasing ourselves with the thought of being in at the death of him. At our entrance, we observed several men employed in preparing dinner; and there issued from the ragouts they were taking up, a vapour which conciliated the palate through the medium of the nostrils. The Marquis de Zenette and Don Juan de Moncade were just come. The founder of the feast seemed a

great simpleton. He aped the man of fashion with a most clumsy grace; a wretched copy of admirable originals, or, more properly, an idiot in the chair of wisdom and taste. Figure to yourself a man of this character in the centre of five bantering fellows, all intent on making a jest of him, and drawing him into ridiculous expenses. Gentlemen, said Don Alvar, after the first interchange of civilities, give me leave to introduce you to Signor Gregorio de Noriega, a most brilliant star in the hemisphere of fashion. He owns a thousand amiable qualities. Do you know that he has an highly cultivated understanding? Choose your own subject, he is equally at home in every branch, from the subtilty and closeness of logic, to the elementary science of the criss-cross-row. Oh! this is really too flattering, interrupted the scot and lot gentleman with a very uncouth laugh. I might, Signor Alvaro, put you to the blush as you have put me; for you may truly be termed a reservoir as it were, a common sewer of erudition. I had no intention, replied Don Alvaro, to draw upon myself so savoury an encomium; but truly, gentlemen, Signor Gregorio cannot fail of establishing a name in the world. As for me, said Don Antonio, what is so delightful in my eyes, far above the honours of logic or the criss-cross-row, is the tasteful selection of his company. Instead of demeaning himself to the level of tradesmen, he associates only with the young nobility, and sets the expense at nought. There is an elevation of sentiment in this conduct which enchants me: and this is what you may truly call disbursing with taste and judgment.

These ironical speeches were only the preludes to a continual strain of banter. Poor Gregorio was attacked on all hands. The wits shot their bolts by turns, but they made no impression on the fool; on the contrary, he took all they said literally, and seemed highly pleased with his guests, as if they did him a favour by making him their laughing-stock. In short, he served them for a butt while they sat at table, which they did not quit during the afternoon, nor till late at night. We, as well as our masters, drank as we liked, so that the servants'-hall and the dining-room were in equally high order when we took our leave of the young jeweller.

CHAPTER V

GIL BLAS BECOMES THE DARLING OF THE FAIR SEX, AND MAKES AN INTERESTING ACQUAINTANCE

After some hours' sleep I got up in fine spirits; and calling the advice of Melendez to mind, went, till my master was stirring, to pay my court to our steward, whose vanity was rather flattered by this attention. He received me with a gracious air, and inquired how I was reconciled to the habits and manners of the young nobility. I answered, that they were strange to me as yet, but that use and good example might work wonders in the end.

Use and good example did work wonders, and that right soon. My temper and conduct were quite altered. From a discreet, sober lad, I got to be a lively, heedless merry andrew. Don Antonio's servant paid me a compliment on my transformation, and told me that there wanted nothing but a tender interest in the lovely part of the creation to shine like a new star dropped from the heavens. He pointed out to me that it was an indispensable requisite in the character of a pretty fellow, that all our set were well with some fine woman or other; and that he himself, to his own share, engrossed the favours of two beauties in high life. I was of opinion that the rascal lied. Master Mogicon, said I, you are doubtless a very dapper, lively little fellow, with a modest assurance; but still I do not comprehend how women of quality, not having your sweet person on their own private establishments, should run the risk of being detected in an intrigue with a footman out of doors. Oh! as for that, answered he, they do not know my condition. To my master's wardrobe, and even to his name, am I indebted for these conquests. I will tell you how it is. I dress myself up as a young nobleman, and assume the manners of one. I go to public places, and tip the wink first to one woman and then to another, till I meet with one who returns the signal. Her I follow, and find means to speak with her. I take the name of Don Antonio Centellés. I plead for an assignation, the lady is squeamish about it; I am pressing, she is kind, *et cætera*. Thus it is, my fine fellow,

that I contrive to carry on my intrigues, and I would have you profit by the hint.

I was too ambitious of shining like a new star dropped from the heavens, to turn a deaf ear to such counsel; besides, there was about me no aversion to an amour. I therefore laid a plan to disguise myself as a young nobleman, and look out for adventures of gallantry. There was a risk in assuming my masquerade dress at home, lest it might be observed. I took a complete suit from my master's wardrobe, and made it up into a bundle, which I carried to a barber's, where I thought I could dress and undress conveniently. There I tricked myself out to the best advantage. The barber too lent a helping hand to my attire. When we thought it adjusted to a nicety, I sauntered towards Saint Jerome's meadow, whence I felt morally certain that I should not return without making an impression. But I could not even get thither, without a proof of my own attractions.

As I was crossing a bye-street, a lady of genteel figure, elegantly dressed, came out of a small house, and got into an hired carriage standing at the door. I stopped short to look at her, and bowed significantly, so as to convey an intimation that my heart was not insensible. On her part, to show me that her face was not less lovely than her person, she lifted up her veil for a moment. In the mean time the coach set off, and I stood stock still in the street, not a little stiffened at this vision. A vastly pretty woman! said I to myself, bless us! this is just what is wanting to make me perfectly accomplished. If the two ladies who share Mogicon between them are equally handsome, the scoundrel is in luck! I should be delighted with her for a mistress. Ruminating on these things, I looked by chance towards the house whence that lovely creature had glided, and saw at a window on the ground floor an old woman beckoning me to come in.

I flew like lightning into the house, and found, in a very neat parlour, this venerable and wary matron, who, taking me for a marquis at least, dropped a low curtsey, and said—I doubt not, my lord, but you must have a bad opinion of a woman who, without the slightest acquaintance, beckons you out of the street; but you will perhaps judge more favourably of me when you shall know that I do not pay

that compliment promiscuously. You look like a man of fashion! You are perfectly in the right, my old girl, interrupted I, stretching out my right leg, and throwing the weight of my body on my left hip; mine is, vanity apart, one of the best families in Spain. It must be so by your looks, replied she, and I will fairly own that I delight in doing a kindness to people of quality, that is my weak side. I watched you through my window. You looked very earnestly at a lady who has just left me. Perhaps you may have taken a fancy to her? tell me so plainly. By the honour of my house, answered I, she has shot me through the heart. I never saw anything so tempting; a most divine creature! Do bring us acquainted, my dear, and rely on my gratitude. It is worth while to do these little offices for us of the beau monde; they are better paid than our bills.

I have told you once for all, replied the old woman, I am entirely devoted to people of condition; it is my passion to be useful to them: I receive here, for example, a certain class of ladies, whom appearances prevent from seeing their favourites at home. I lend them my house, and thus the warmth of their constitutions is indulged, without risk to their characters. Vastly well, quoth I, and you have just done that kindness to the lady in question? No, answered she, this is a young widow of quality, in want of an admirer; but so difficult in her choice, that I do not know whether you will do for her, however great your requisites may be. I have already introduced to her three well-furnished gallants, but she turned up her nose at them. Oh! egad, my life, exclaimed I confidently, you have only to stick me in her skirts, I will give you a good account of her, take my word for it. I long to have a grapple with a beauty of such peremptory demands, they have not yet fallen in my way. Well, then, said the old woman, you have only to come hither to-morrow at the same hour, your curiosity shall be satisfied. I will not fail, rejoined I; we shall see whether a young nobleman can miss a conquest.

I returned to the little barber's without looking for other adventures, but deeply interested in the event of this. Therefore, on the following day, I went, in splendid attire, to the old woman's an hour sooner than the time. My lord, said she, you are punctual, and I take it kindly. To be sure

the game is worth the chase. I have seen our young widow, and we have had a good deal of talk about you. Not a word was to be said; but I have taken such a liking to you that I cannot hold my tongue. You have made yourself agreeable, and will soon be a happy man. Between ourselves, the lady is a relishing morsel, her husband did not live long with her; he glided away like a shadow: she has all the merit of an absolute girl. The good old lady, no doubt, meant one of those clever girls, who contrive not to live single, though they live unmarried.

The heroine of the assignation came soon in an hired carriage, as on the day before, dressed very magnificently. As soon as she came into the room, I led off with five or six coxcombical bows, accompanied by the most fashionable grimaces. After this, I went up to her with a very familiar air, and said—My adored angel, you behold a gentleman of no mean rank, whom your charms have undone. Your image since yesterday, has taken complete possession of my fancy; you have turned a duchess neck and heels out of my heart, who was beginning to establish a footing there. The triumph is too glorious for me, answered she, throwing off her veil, but still my transports are not without alloy. Young men of fashion love variety, and their hearts are, they say, bandied about from one to the other like a piece of base money. Ah! my sovereign mistress, replied I, let us leave the future to shift for itself, and think only of the present. You are lovely, I am in love. If my passion is not hateful to you, let it take its course at random. We will embark like true sailors, set the storms and shipwreck of a long voyage at defiance, and only take the fair weather of the time present into the account.

In finishing this speech, I threw myself in raptures at the feet of my nymph; and the better to hit off my assumed character, pressed her with some little peevishness not to delay my bliss. She seemed a little touched by my remonstrances, but thought it too soon to yield, and giving me a gentle rebuff—Hold, said she, you are too importunate, this is like a rake. I fear you are but a loose young fellow. For shame, madam, exclaimed I; can you set your face against what women of the first taste and condition encourage? A prejudice against what is vulgarly called vice may be all very well for citizen's wives. That is decisive,

replied she, there is no resisting so forcible a plea. I see plainly that with men of your order dissimulation is to no purpose; a woman must meet you half way. Learn then your victory, added she with an appearance of disorder, as if her modesty suffered by the avowal; you have inspired me with sentiments such as are new to my heart, and I only wait to know who you are, that I may take you for my acknowledged lover. I believe you a young lord and a gentleman, yet there is no trusting to appearances; and however prepossessed I may be in your favour, I would not give away my affections to a stranger.

I recollected at the moment how Don Antonio's servant had got out of a similar perplexity; and determining, after his example, to pass for my master—Madam, said I to my dainty widow, I will not excuse myself from telling you my name, it is one that will not disparage its owner. Have you ever heard of Don Matthias de Silva? Yes, replied she; indeed I have seen him with a lady of my acquaintance. Though considerably improved in impudence, I was a little troubled by this discovery. Yet I rallied my forces in an instant, and extricated myself with a happy presence of mind. Well then, my fair one, retorted I, the lady of your acquaintance . . . knows a lord . . . of my acquaintance . . . and I am of his acquaintance; of his own family, since you must know it. His grandfather married the sister-in-law of my father's uncle. You see we are very near relations. My name is Don Cæsar. I am the only son of the great Don Ferdinand de Ribera, slain fifteen years ago, in a battle on the frontiers of Portugal. I could give you all the particulars of the action; it was a devilish sharp one. . . . . but to fight it over again would be losing the precious moments of mutual love.

After this discourse I got to be importunate and impassioned, but without bringing matters at all forwarder. The favours which my goddess winked at my snatching, tended only to make me languish for what she was more chary of. The tyrant got back to her coach, which was waiting at the door. Nevertheless, I withdrew, well enough pleased with my success, though it still fell short of the only perfect issue. If, said I to myself, I have obtained indulgences but by halves, it is because this lady, forsooth, is a high-born dame, and thinks it beneath her quality to play the very woman

at the first interview. The pride of pedigree stands in the way of my advancement just now, but in a few days we shall be better acquainted. To be sure, it did not once come into my head that she might be one of those cunning gipsies always on the catch. Yet I liked better to look at things on the right side than on the wrong, and thus maintained a favourable opinion of my widow. We had agreed at parting to meet again on the day after the morrow; and the hope of arriving at the summit of my wishes gave me a foretaste of the pleasures with which I tickled my fancy.

With my brain full of joyous traces, I returned to my barber. Having changed my dress, I went to attend my master at the tennis-court. I found him at play, and saw that he won; for he was not one of those impenetrable gamesters who make or mar a fortune without moving a muscle. In prosperity he was flippant and overbearing, but quite peevish on the losing side. He left the tennis-court in high spirits, and went for the *Prince's Theatre*. I followed him to the box door, then putting a ducat into my hand—Here, Gil Blas, said he, as I have been a winner to-day, you shall not be the worse for it; go, divert yourself with your friends, and come to me about midnight at Arsenia's, where I am to sup with Don Alexo Segiar. He then went in, and I stood debating with whom I should disburse my ducat, according to the pious will of the founder. I did not muse long. Clarin, Don Alexo's servant, just then came in my way. I took him to the next tavern, and we amused ourselves there till midnight. Thence we repaired to Arsenia's house, where Clarin had orders to attend. A little footboy opened the door, and showed us into a room downstairs, where Arsenia's waiting-woman, and the lady who held the same office about Florimonde, were laughing ready to split their sides, while their mistresses were above-stairs with our masters.

The addition of two jolly fellows just come from a good supper, could not be unwelcome to abigails, and to the abigails of actresses too; but what was my astonishment when in one of these lowly ladies I discovered my widow, my adorable widow, whom I took for a countess or a marchioness! She appeared equally amazed to see her dear Don Cæsar de Ribera metamorphosed into the valet of a beau. However, we looked at one another without being out of

countenance; indeed, such a tingling sensation of laughter came over us both, as we could not help indulging in. After which Laura, for that was her name, drawing me aside while Clarin was speaking to her fellow-servant, held out her hand to me very kindly, and said in a low voice—Accept this pledge, Signor Don Cæsar; mutual congratulations are more to the purpose than mutual reproaches, my friend. You topped your part to perfection, and I was not quite contemptible in mine. What say you? confess now, did not you take me for one of those precious peeresses who are fond of a little smuggled amusement? It is even so, answered I, but whoever you are, my empress, I have not changed my sentiments with my paraphernalia. Accept my services in good part, and let the valet-de-chambre of Don Matthias consummate what Don Cæsar has so happily begun. Get you gone, replied she, I like you ten times better in your natural than in your artificial character. You are as a man what I am as a woman, and that is the greatest compliment I can pay you. You are admitted into the number of my adorers. We have no longer any need of the old woman as a blind, you may come and see me whenever you like. We theatrical ladies are no slaves to form, but live higgledy piggledy with the men. I allow that the effects are sometimes visible, but the public wink hard at our irregularities; the drama's patrons, as you well know, give the drama's laws, and absolve us from all others.

We went no further, because there were bystanders. The conversation became general, lively, jovial, inclining to loose jokes, not very carefully wrapped up. We all of us bore a bob. Arsenia's attendant above all, my amiable Laura, was very conspicuous; but her wit was so extremely nimble, that her virtue could never overtake it. Our masters and the actresses on the floor above, raised incessant peals of laughter, which reached us in the regions below; and probably the entertainment was much alike with the celestials and the infernals. If all the knowing remarks had been written down, which escaped from the philosophers that night assembled at Arsenia's, I really think it would have been a manual for the rising generation. Yet we could not arrest the chaste moon in her progress; the rising of that blab, the sun, parted us. Clarin followed the heels of Don Alexo, and I went home with Don Matthias.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRINCE'S COMPANY OF COMEDIANS

My master getting up the next day, received a note from Don Alexo Segiar, desiring his company immediately. We went, and found there the Marquis de Zenette, and another young nobleman of prepossessing manners, whom I had never seen. Don Matthias, said Segiar to my protector, introducing the stranger, give me leave to present Don Pompeyo de Castro, a relation of mine. He has been at the court of Portugal almost from his childhood. He reached Madrid last night, and returns to Lisbon to-morrow. He can allow me only one day. I wish to make the most of the precious moments, and thought of asking you and the Marquis de Zenette to make out the time agreeably. Thereupon my master and Don Alexo's relation embraced heartily, and complimented one another in the most extravagant manner. I was much pleased with Don Pompeyo's conversation, it showed both acuteness and solidity.

They dined with Segiar; and the gentlemen, after the dessert, amused themselves at play till the theatre opened. Then they went all together to the *Prince's House*, to see a new tragedy, called *The Queen of Carthage*. At the end of the piece they returned to supper, and their conversation ran first on the composition, then upon the actors. As for the work, cried Don Matthias, I think very lightly of it. Eneas is a more pious blockhead there than in the Eneid. But it must be owned that the piece was played divinely. What does Signor Don Pompeyo think of it? He does not seem to agree with me. Gentlemen, said the illustrious stranger with a smile, you are so enraptured with your actors, and still more with your actresses, that I scarcely dare avow my dissent. That is very prudent, interrupted Don Alexo with a sneer, your criticisms would be ill received. You should be tender of our actresses before the trumpeters of their fame. We carouse with them every day, we warrant them sound in their conceptions: we would give vouchers for the justness of their expression if it were necessary. No doubt of it, answered his kinsman, you would do the same kind office by their likes

and their manners, from the same motives of companionable feeling.

Your ladies of the sock and buskin at Lisbon, said the Marquis de Zenette, laughing, are doubtless far superior? They certainly are, replied Don Pompeyo. They are some of them at least perfect in their cast. And these, resumed the Marquis, would be warranted by you in their conceptions and expressions? I have no personal acquaintance with them, rejoined Don Pompeyo. I am not of their revels, and can judge of their merit without partiality. Do you, in good earnest, think your company first-rate? No, really, said the Marquis, I think no such thing, and only plead the cause of a few individuals. I give up all the rest. Will you not allow extraordinary powers to the actress who played Dido? Did she not personate that queen with the dignity, and at the same time with all the bewitching charms, calculated to realize our idea of the character? Could you help admiring the skill with which she seizes on the passions of the spectator, and harmonizes their tone to the vibrations she purposes to produce? She may be called perfect in the exquisite art of declaiming. I agree with you, said Don Pompeyo, that she can touch the string either of terror or of pity: never did any actress come closer to the heart, and the performance is altogether fine; but still she is not without her defects. Two or three things disgusted me in her playing. Would she denote surprise? she glances her eyes to and fro in a most extravagant manner, altogether unbecoming her supposed majesty as a princess. Add to this, that in welling her voice, which is of itself sound and mellifluous, she goes out of her natural key, and assumes a harsh ranting tone. Besides, it would seem as if she might be suspected in more than one passage, of not very clearly comprehending her author. Yet I would in candour rather suppose her wanting in diligence than capacity.

As far as I see, said Don Matthias to the critic, you will never write complimentary odes to our actresses! Pardon me, answered Don Pompeyo. I can discover high talent through all their imperfections. I must say that I was enchanted with the chambermaid in the interlude. What fine natural parts! With what grace she treads the stage! Has she anything pointed to deliver? she heightens it by an arch smile, with a keen glance and sarcastic emphasis, which

conveys more to the understanding than the words to the ear. It might be objected that she sometimes gives too much scope to her animal spirits, and exceeds the limits of allowable freedom, but that would be hypercritical. There is one bad habit I should strongly advise her to correct. Sometimes in the very crisis of the action, and in an affecting passage, she bursts in all at once upon the interest with some misplaced jest, to curry favour with the mob of barren spectators. The pit, you will say, is caught by her artifice; that may be well for her popularity, but not for their taste.

And what do you think of the men? interrupted the Marquis; you must give them no quarter, since you have handled the women so roughly. Not so, said Don Pompeyo. There are some promising young actors, and I am particularly well pleased with that corpulent performer who played the part of Dido's prime minister. His recitation is unaffected, and he declaims just as they do in Portugal. If you can bear such a fellow as that, said Segiar, you must be charmed with the representative of Eneas. Did not you think him a great, an original performer? Very original, indeed, answered the critic; his inflections are quite his own, they are as shrill as an hautboy. Almost always out of nature, he rattles the impressive words of the sentence off his tongue, while he labours and lingers on the expletives; the poor conjunctions are frightened at their own report as they go off. He entertained me excessively, and especially when he was expressing in confidence his distress at abandoning the princess; never was grief more ludicrously depicted. Fair and softly, cousin, replied Don Alexo; you will make us believe at last that good taste is not greatly cultivated at the court of Portugal. Do you know that the actor of whom we are speaking is esteemed a phenomenon? Did you not observe what thunders of applause he called down? He cannot therefore be contemptible. That therefore does not prove the proposition replied Don Pompeyo. But, gentlemen, let us lay aside, I beseech you, the injudicious suffrages of the pit; they are often given to performers very unseasonably. Indeed, their boisterous tokens of approbation are more frequently bestowed on paltry copies than on original merit, as Phedrus teaches us by an ingenious fable. Allow me to repeat it as follows:

The whole population of a city was assembled in a large

square to see a pantomime played. Among the performers there was one whose feats were applauded every instant. This buffoon, at the end of the entertainment, wished to close the scene with a new device. He came alone upon the stage, stooping down, covering his head with his mantle, and began counterfeiting the squeak of a pig. He acquitted himself so naturally as to be suspected of having the animal itself concealed within the folds of his drapery. He stripped, but there was no pig. The assembly rang with more furious applause than ever. A peasant, among the spectators, was disgusted at this misplaced admiration. Gentlemen, exclaimed he, you are in the wrong to be so delighted with this buffoon, he is not so good a mimic as you take him for. I can enact the pig better; if you doubt it, only attend here this time to-morrow. The people, prejudiced in the cause of their favourite, collected in greater numbers on the next day, rather to hiss the countryman than to see what he could do. The rivals appeared on the stage. The buffoon began, and was more applauded than the day before. Then the farmer stooping down in his turn, with his head wrapped up in his cloak, pulled the ear of a real pig under his arm, and made it squeal most horribly. Yet this enlightened audience persisted in giving the preference to their favourite, and hooted the countryman off the boards; who producing the pig before he went, said—Gentlemen, you are not hissing me, but the original pig. So much for your judgment.

Cousin, said Don Alexo, your fable is rather satirical. Nevertheless, in spite of your pig, we will not bate an inch of our opinion. But let us change the subject, this is grown threadbare. Then you set off to-morrow, do what we can to keep you with us longer? I should like, answered his kinsman, to protract my stay with you, but it is not in my power. I have told you already that I am come to the Court of Spain on an affair of State. Yesterday, on my arrival, I had a conference with the prime minister; I am to see him to-morrow morning, and shall set out immediately afterwards on my return to Lisbon. You are become quite a Portuguese, observed Segiar, and, to all appearance, we shall lose you entirely from Madrid. I think otherwise, replied Don Pompeyo, I have the honour to stand well with the king of Portugal, and have many motives of attachment to that court; yet with all the kindness that sovereign has

testified towards me, would you believe that I have been on the point of quitting his dominions for ever. Indeed! by what strange accident? said the Marquis. Give us the history, I beseech you. Very readily, answered Don Pompeyo, and at the same time my own, for it is closely interwoven with the recital for which you have called.

CHAPTER VII

HISTORY OF DON POMPEYO DE CASTRO

Don Alexo knows, that from my boyish days, my passion was for a military life. Our own country being at peace, I went into Portugal; thence to Africa with the Duke of Braganza, who gave me a commission. I was a younger brother, with as slender a provision as most in Spain; so that my only chance was in attracting the notice of the commander-in-chief by my bravery. I was so far from deficient in my duty, that the Duke promoted me, step by step, to one of the most honourable posts in the service. After a long war, of which you all know the issue, I devoted myself to the court; and the King, on strong testimonials from the general officers, rewarded me with a considerable pension. Alive to that sovereign's generosity, I lost no opportunity of proving my gratitude by my diligence. I was in attendance as often as etiquette would allow me to offer myself to his notice. By this conduct I gained insensibly the love of that prince, and received new favours from his hands.

One day, when I distinguished myself in running at the ring, and in a bull-fight preceding it, all the court extolled my strength and dexterity. On my return home, with my honours thick upon me, I found there a note, informing me that a lady, my conquest over whom ought to flatter me more than all the glory I had gained that day, wished to have the pleasure of my company; and that I had only to attend in the evening, at a place marked out in the letter. This was more than all my public triumphs, and I concluded the writer to be a woman of the first quality. You may guess that I did not loiter by the way. An old woman in waiting, as my guide, conducted me by a little garden-gate into a

large house, and left me in an elegant closet, saying—Stay here, I will acquaint my mistress with your arrival. I observed a great many articles of value in the closet, which was magnificently illuminated; but this splendour only caught my attention as confirming me in my previous opinion of the lady's high rank. If appearances strengthened that conjecture, her noble and majestic air on her entrance left no doubt on my mind. Yet I was a little out in my calculation.

Noble sir, said she, after the step I have taken in your favour it were impertinent to disown my partiality. Your brilliant actions of to-day, in presence of the court, were not the inspirers of my sentiments, they only urge forward this avowal. I have seen you more than once, have inquired into your character, and the result has determined me to follow the impulse of my heart. But do not suppose that you are well with a Duchess. I am but the widow of a captain in the King's Guards; yet there is something to throw a radiance round your victory . . . the preference you have gained over one of the first noblemen in the kingdom. The Duke d'Almeyda loves me, and presses his suit with ardour, yet without success. My vanity only induces me to bear his importunities.

Though I saw plainly, by this address, that I had got in with a coquet, my presiding star was not a whit out of my good graces for involving me in this adventure. Donna Hortensia, for that was the lady's name, was just in the ripeness and luxuriance of youth and dazzling beauty. Nay, more, she had refused the possession of her heart to the earnest entreaties of a duke, and offered it unsolicited to me. What a feather in the cap of a Spanish cavalier! I prostrated myself at Hortensia's feet, to thank her for her favours. I talked just as a man of gallantry always does talk, and she had reason to be satisfied with the extravagance of my acknowledgments. Thus we parted the best friends in the world, on the terms of meeting every evening when the Duke d'Almeyda was prevented from coming; and she promised to give me due notice of his absence. The bargain was exactly fulfilled, and I was turned into the Adonis of this new Venus.

But the pleasures of this life are transitory. With all the lady's precautions to conceal our private treaty of

commerce from my rival, he found means of gaining a knowledge, of which it concerned us greatly to keep him ignorant: a disloyal chamber-maid divulged the state secret. This nobleman, naturally generous, but proud, self-sufficient, and violent, was exasperated at my presumption. Anger and jealousy set him beside himself. Taking counsel only with his rage, he resolved on an infamous revenge. One night when I was with Hortensia, he waylaid me at the little garden-gate, with all his servants provided with cudgels. As soon as I came out, he ordered me to be seized, and beat to death by these wretches. Lay on, said he, let the rash intruder give up the ghost under your chastisement; thus shall his insolence be punished. No sooner had he finished these words, than his myrmidons assaulted me in a body, and gave me such a beating, as to stretch me senseless on the ground: after which they hurried off with their master, to whom this butchery had been a delicious pastime. I lay the remainder of the night, just as they had left me. At daybreak some people passed by, who, finding that life was still in me, had the humanity to carry me to a surgeon. Fortunately my wounds were not mortal; and, falling into skilful hands, I was perfectly cured in two months. At the end of that period I made my appearance again at court, and resumed my former way of life, except that I steered clear of Hortensia, who on her part made no further attempt to renew the acquaintance, because the Duke, on that condition, had pardoned her infidelity.

As my adventure was the town talk, and I was known to be no coward, people were astonished to see me as quiet as if I had received no affront; for I kept my thoughts to myself, and seemed to have no quarrel with any man living. No one knew what to think of my counterfeited insensibility. Some imagined that, in spite of my courage, the rank of the aggressor overawed me, and occasioned my tacit submission. Others, with more reason, mistrusted my silence, and considered my inoffensive demeanour as a cover to my revenge. The King was of opinion with these last, that I was not a man to put up with an insult, and that I should not be wanting to myself at a convenient opportunity. To discover my real intentions, he sent for me one day into his closet, where he said: Don Pompeyo, I know what accident has befallen you, and am surprised, I own, at your

forbearance. You are certainly acting a part. Sire, answered I, how can I know whom to challenge? I was attacked in the night by persons unknown: it is a misfortune of which I must make the best. No, no, replied the King, I am not to be duped by these evasive answers. The whole story has reached my ears. The Duke d'Almeyda has touched your honour to the quick. You are nobly born, and a Castilian: I know what that double character requires. You cherish hostile designs. Admit me a party to your purposes; it must be so. Never fear the consequences of making me your confidant.

Since your majesty commands it, resumed I, my sentiments shall be laid open without reserve. Yes, sir, I meditate a severe retribution. Every man, wearing such a name as mine, must account for its untarnished lustre with his family. You know the unworthy treatment I have experienced; and I purpose assassinating the Duke d'Almeyda, as a mode of revenge correspondent to the injury. I shall plunge a dagger in his bosom, or shoot him through the head, and escape, if I can, into Spain. This is my design.

It is violent, said the King: and yet I have little to say against it, after the provocation which the Duke d'Almeyda has given you. He is worthy of the punishment you destine for him. But do not be in a hurry with your project. Leave me to devise a method of bringing you together again as friends. Oh! sir, exclaimed I with vexation, why did you extort my secret from me? What expedient can . . .If mine is not to your satisfaction, interrupted he, you may execute your first intention. I do not mean to abuse your confidence. I shall not implicate your honour; so rest contented on that head.

I was greatly puzzled to guess by what means the King designed to terminate this affair amicably. But thus it was. He sent to speak with the Duke d'Almeyda in private. Duke, said he, you have insulted Don Pompeyo de Castro. You are not ignorant that he is a man of noble birth, a soldier who has served with credit, and stands high in my favour. You owe him reparation. I am not of a temper to refuse it, answered the Duke. If he complains of my outrageous behaviour, I am ready to justify it by the law of arms. Something very different must be done, replied the

King: a Spanish gentleman understands the point of honour too well to fight on equal terms with a cowardly assassin. I can use no milder term; and you can only atone for the heinousness of your conduct, by presenting a cane in person to your antagonist, and offering to submit yourself to its discipline. Oh heaven! exclaimed the Duke: what! sir, would you have a man of my rank degrade, debase himself before a simple gentleman, and submit to be caned! No, replied the monarch, I will oblige Don Pompeyo to promise not to touch you. Only offer him the cane, and ask his pardon: that is all I require from you. And that is too much, sir, interrupted the Duke d'Almeyda warmly; I had rather remain exposed to all the secret machinations of his resentment. Your life is dear to me, said the King; and I should wish this affair to have no bad consequences. To terminate it with less disgust to yourself, I will be the only witness of the satisfaction which I order you to offer to the Spaniard.

The King was obliged to stretch his influence over the Duke to the utmost, before he could induce him to so mortifying a step. However, the peremptory monarch effected his purpose, and then sent for me. He related the particulars of his conversation with my enemy, and inquired if I should be content with the stipulated reparation. I answered, yes: and gave my word that, far from striking the offender, I would not even accept the cane, when he presented it. With this understanding, the Duke and myself at a certain hour attended the King, who took us into his closet. Come, said he to the Duke, acknowledge your fault, and deserve to be forgiven by the humility of your contrition. Then my antagonist made his apology, and offered me the cane in his hand. Don Pompeyo, said the monarch unexpectedly, take the cane, and let not my presence prevent you from doing justice to your outraged honour. I release you from your promise not to strike the Duke. No, sir, answered I, it is enough that he has submitted to the indignity of the offer: an offended Spaniard asks no more. Well, then! replied the King, since you are content with this satisfaction, you may both of you at once assume the privilege of a gentlemanly quarrel. Measure your swords, and discuss the question honourably. It is what I most ardently desire, exclaimed the Duke d'Almeyda in a menac-

ing tone; for that only is competent to make me amends for the disgraceful step I have taken.

With these words, he went away full of rage and shame; and sent to tell me, two hours after, that he was waiting for me, in a retired place. I kept the appointment, and found this nobleman ready to fight lustily. He was not five and forty; deficient neither in courage nor in skill: so that the match was fair and equal. Come on, Don Pompeyo, said he, let us terminate our difference here. Our hostility ought to be reciprocally mortal; yours, for my aggression, and mine, for having asked your pardon. These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than he drew upon me so suddenly, that I had no time to reply. He pressed very closely upon me at first, but I had the good fortune to put by all his thrusts. I acted on the offensive in my turn: the encounter was evidently with a man equally skilled in defence or in attack; and there is no knowing what might have been the issue, if he had not made a false step in retiring, and fallen backwards. I stood still immediately, and said to the Duke, Recover yourself. Why give me any quarter? he answered. Your forbearance only aggravates my disgrace. I will not take advantage of an accident, replied I; it would only tarnish my glory. Once more recover yourself, and let us fight it out.

Don Pompeyo, said he rising, after this act of generosity, honour allows me not to renew the attack upon you. What would the world say of me, were I to wound you mortally? I should be branded as a coward for having murdered a man, at whose mercy I had just before lain prostrate. I cannot therefore again lift my arm against your life, and I feel my resentful passions subsiding into the sweet emotions of gratitude. Don Pompeyo, let us mutually lay aside our hatred. Let us go still further; let us be friends. Ah! my lord, exclaimed I, so flattering a proposal I joyfully accept. I proffer you my sincere friendship; and, as an earnest, promise never more to approach Donna Hortensia, though she herself should invite me. It is my duty, said he, to yield that lady to you. Justice requires me to give her up, since her affections are yours already. No, no, interrupted I; you love her. Her partiality in my favour would give you uneasiness; I sacrifice my own pleasures to your peace. Ah! too generous Castilian, replied the Duke, embracing me,

your sentiments are truly noble. With what remorse do they strike me! Grieved and ashamed, I look back on the outrage you have sustained. The reparation in the King's chamber seems now too trifling. A better recompense awaits you. To obliterate all remembrance of your shame, take one of my nieces whose hand is at my disposal. She is a rich heiress, not fifteen, with beauty beyond the attractions of mere youth.

I made my acknowledgments to the Duke in terms such as the high honour of his alliance might suggest, and married his niece a few days afterwards. All the court complimented this nobleman on having made such generous amends to an insulted rival; and my friends took part in my joy at the happy issue of an adventure which might have led to the most melancholy consequences. From this time, gentlemen, I have lived happily at Lisbon. I am the idol of my wife, and have not sunk the lover in the husband. The Duke d'Almeyda gives me new proofs of friendship every day; and I may venture to boast of standing high in the King of Portugal's good graces. The importance of my errand hither sufficiently assures me of his confidence.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ACCIDENT, IN CONSEQUENCE OF WHICH GIL BLAS WAS OBLIGED TO LOOK OUT FOR ANOTHER PLACE

Such was Don Pompeyo's story, which Don Alexo's servant and myself overheard, though we were prudently sent away before he began his recital. Instead of withdrawing, we skulked behind the door, which we had left half open, and from that station we did not miss a word. After this, the company went on drinking; but they did not prolong their carousals till the morning, because Don Pompeyo, who was to speak with the prime minister, wished for a little rest beforehand. The Marquis de Zenette and my master took a cordial leave of the stranger, and left him with his kinsman.

We went to bed for once before daybreak; and Don Matthias, when he awoke, invested me with a new office. Gil Blas, said he, take pen, ink, and paper, and write two or

three letters as I shall dictate: you shall henceforth be my secretary. Well and good! said I to myself, a plurality of functions. As footman, I follow my master's heels; as valet-de-chambre, I help him to dress; and write for him as his secretary. Heaven be praised for my apotheosis! Like the triple Hecate of the Pantheon, I am to enact three different characters at the same time. Can you guess my intention? continued he. Thus it is: but take care what you are about; your life may depend on it. As I am continually meeting with fellows who boast of their success among the women, I mean, by way of getting the upper hand, to fill my pockets with fictitious love-letters, and read them in company. It will be amusing enough. Happier than my competitors, who make conquests only for the pleasure of the boast, I shall take the credit of intrigue, and spare myself the labour. But vary your writing, so that the manufacture may not be detected by the sameness of the hand.

I then sat down to comply with the commands of Don Matthias, who first dictated a tender epistle to this tune—*You did not keep your promise to-night. Ah! Don Matthias, how will you exculpate yourself? My error was a cruel one! But you punish me deservedly for my vanity, in fancying that business and amusement were all to give way before the pleasure of seeing Donna Clara de Mendoza!* After this pretty note, he made me write another, as if from a lady who sacrificed a prince to him; and then a third, whose fair writer offered, if she could rely on his discretion, to embark with him for the shores of Cytherean enchantment. It was not enough to dictate these love-sick strains; he forced me to subscribe them with the most high-flying names in Madrid. I could not forbear hinting at some little hazard in all this, but he begged me to keep my sage counsels till they were called for. I was obliged to hold my tongue, and dispatch his orders out of hand. That done, he got up, and dressed with my assistance. The letters were put into his pocket, and out he went. I followed him to dinner with Don Juan de Moncade, who entertained five or six gentlemen of his acquaintance that day.

There was a grand set-out, and mirth, the best relish, was not wanting to the banquet. All the guests contributed to enliven the conversation, some by wit and humour, others by anecdotes of which the relaters were the heroes. My

master would not lose so fine an opportunity of bringing our joint performances to bear. He read them audibly, and with so much assurance, that probably the whole party, with the exception of his secretary, was taken in by the device. Among the company, before whom this trick was so impudently played off, there was one person, by name Don Lope de Velasco. This person, a very grave don, instead of making himself merry like the rest with the fictitious triumphs of the reader, asked him coolly if the conquest of Donna Clara had been achieved with any great difficulty. Less than the least, answered Don Matthias; the advances were all on her side. She saw me in public, and took a fancy to my person. A scout was commissioned to follow me, and thus she got at my name and condition. She wrote to me, and gave me an appointment at an hour of the night when the house was sure to be quiet. I was true as the needle to the pole; her bedchamber was the place . . . But prudence and delicacy forbid my describing what passed there.

At this instance of tender regard for the lady's character, Signor de Velasco betrayed some very passionate workings in his countenance. It was easy to see the interest he took in the subject. All these letters, said he to my master, looking at him with an eye of indignation and contempt, are infamous forgeries, and above all that which you boast of having received from Donna Clara de Mendoza. There is not in all Spain a more modest young creature than herself. For these two years, a gentleman, at least your equal in birth and personal merit, has been trying every method of insinuating himself into her heart. Scarcely have his assiduities extorted the slightest encouragement: but yet he may flatter himself that, if anything beyond common civility had been granted at all, it would have been to him only. Well! Who says to the contrary? interrupted Don Matthias in a bantering way. I agree with you, that the lady is a very pretty behaved young lady. On my part, I am a very pretty behaved young gentleman. Ergo, you may rest assured that nothing took place between us but what was pretty and well behaved. Indeed! This is too much, interrupted Don Lope in his turn; let us lay aside this unseasonable jesting. You are an impostor. Donna Clara never gave you an appointment by night. Her reputation shall

not be blackened by your ribaldry. But prudence and delicacy forbid my describing what must pass between you and me. With this retort on his lips, he looked contemptuously round, and withdrew with a menacing aspect, which anticipated serious consequences to my judgment. My master, whose courage was better than his cause, held the threats of Don Lope in derision. A blockhead! exclaimed he, bursting into a loud fit of laughter. Our knights-errant used to tilt for the beauty of their mistresses, this fellow would engage in the lists for the forlorn hope of virtue in his; he is more ridiculous than his prototypes.

Velasco's retiring, in vain opposed by Moncade, occasioned no interruption to the merriment. The party, without thinking further about it, kept the ball up briskly, and did not part till they had made free with the next day. We went to bed, that is, my master and myself, about five o'clock in the morning. Sleep sat heavy on my eyelids, and, as I thought, was taking permanent possession thereof; but I reckoned without my host, or rather without our porter, who came and waked me in an hour, to say that there was a lad enquiring for me at the door. Oh! thou infernal porter, muttered I indistinctly, through the interstices of a long yawn, do you consider that I have but now got to bed? Tell the little rascal that I am just asleep; he must come again by-and-by. He insists, replied Cerberus, on speaking with you instantly; his business cannot wait. As that was the case I got up, put on nothing but my breeches and doublet, and went down-stairs, swearing and gaping. My friend, said I, be so good as to let me know what urgent affair procures me the honour of seeing you so early? I have a letter, answered he, to deliver personally into the hands of Signor Don Matthias, to be read by him without loss of time; it is of the last consequence to him—pray show me into his room. As I thought the matter looked serious, I took the liberty of disturbing my master. Excuse me, said I, for waking you, but the pressing nature . . . What do you want? interrupted he, just in my style with the porter. Sir, said the lad who was at my elbow, here is a letter from Don Lope de Velasco. Don Matthias looked at the cover, broke it, and after reading the contents, said to the messenger of Don Lope—My good fellow, I never get up before noon, let the party be ever so agreeable; judge

whether I can be expected to be stirring by six in the morning for a small-sword recreation. You may tell your master, that if he chooses to kick his heels at the spot till half-past twelve, we will come and see how he looks there—carry him that answer. With this flippant speech he plunged down snugly under the bed-clothes and fell fast asleep again as if nothing had happened.

Between eleven and twelve he got up and dressed himself with the utmost composure, and went out, telling me that there was no occasion for my attendance: but I was too much on the tenterhooks about the result to mind his orders. I sneaked after him to Saint Jerome's meadow, where I saw Don Lope de Velasco waiting for him. I took my station to watch them; and was an eye-witness to all the circumstances of their rencounter. They saluted, and began their fierce debate without delay. The engagement lasted long. They exchanged thrusts alternately, with equal skill and mettle. The victory, however, was on the side of Don Lope: he ran my master through, laid him helpless on the ground, and made his escape, with apparent satisfaction at the severe reprisal. I ran up to the unfortunate Don Matthias, and found him in a most desperate situation. The sight melted me. I could not help weeping at a catastrophe to which I had been an involuntary contributor. Nevertheless, with all sympathy, I had still my little wits about me. Home went I in a hurry, without saying a word. I made up a bundle of my own goods and chattels, inadvertently slipping in some odd articles belonging to my master: and when I had deposited this with the barber, where my dress as a fine gentleman was still lodged, I published the news of the fatal accident. Any gaper might have it for the trouble of listening; and above all, I took care to make Rodriguez acquainted with it. He would have been extremely afflicted, but that his own proceedings in this delicate case required all his attention. He called the servants together, ordered them to follow him, and we went all together to Saint Jerome's meadow. Don Matthias was taken up alive, but he died three hours after he was brought home. Thus ended the life of Signor Don Matthias de Silva, only for having taken a fancy to reading supposititious love-letters unseasonably.

CHAPTER IX

A NEW SERVICE, AFTER THE DEATH OF DON MATTHIAS DE SILVA

Some days after the funeral, the establishment was paid up and discharged. I fixed my head-quarters with the little barber, in a very close connection with whom I began to live. It seemed to promise more pleasure than with Melendez. As I was in no want of money, it was time enough to think of another place: besides, I had got to be rather nice on that head. I would not go into service any more, but in families above the vulgar. In short, I was determined to inquire very strictly into the character of a new place. The best would not be too good; such high pretensions did the late valet of a young nobleman think himself entitled to assume above the common herd of servants.

Waiting till fortune should throw a situation in my way, worthy to be honoured by my acceptance, I thought I could not do better than to devote my leisure to my charming Laura, whom I had not seen since the pleasant occurrence of our double discovery. I could not venture on dressing as Don Cæsar de Ribera; it would have been an act of madness to have assumed that style but as a disguise. Besides that my own suit was not much out of condition, all smaller articles had propagated miraculously in the aforesaid bundle. I made myself up, therefore, with the barber's aid, as a sort of middle man between Don Cæsar and Gil Blas. In this demi-character, I knocked at Arsenia's door. Laura was alone in the parlour where we had met last. Ah! is it you? cried she, as soon as she saw me; I thought you were lost. You have had leave to come and see me for this week: but it seems you are modest, and do not presume too much on your license.

I made my apology on the score of my master's death, with my own engagements consequent thereupon; and, I added, in the spirit of gallantry, that in my greatest perplexities, my lovely Laura had always been foremost in my thoughts. That being so, said she, I have no more reproaches to make; and I will frankly own that I have thought of you. As soon as I was acquainted with the untimely

end of Don Matthias, a plan occurred to me, probably not quite displeasing to you. I have heard my mistress say some time ago, that she wanted a sort of man of business; a good arithmetician, to keep an exact account of our outgoings. I fixed my affections on your lordship; you seem exactly calculated for such an office. I feel myself, answered I, a steward by inspiration. I have read all that Aristotle has written on finance; and as for reducing it to the modern system of book-keeping . . . But, my dear girl, there is one impediment in the way. What impediment? said Laura. I have sworn, replied I, never again to live with a commoner: I have sworn by Styx, or something else as binding. If Jupiter could not burst the links of such an oath, judge whether a poor servant ought not to be bound by it. What do you mean by a commoner? rejoined the impetuous abigail: for what do you take us actresses? Do you take us for the ribs of the limbs of the law? for attorneys' wives? I would have you to know, my friend, that actresses rank with the first nobility; being only common to the uncommon, and therefore, though common, uncommonly illustrious.

On that footing, my uncommon commoner, said I, the post you have destined for me is mine: I shall not lower my dignity by accepting it. No, to be sure, said she: backwards and forwards between a puppy of fashion and a she-wolf of the stage; why, it is exactly preserving an equilibrium of rank in the creation. We are sympathetic animals, just on a level with the people of quality. We have our equipages in the same style; we give our little suppers on the same scale; and on the broad ground we are just of as much use in civil society. In fact, to draw a parallel between a marquis and a player through the space of four and twenty hours, they are just on a par. The marquis, for three-fourths of the time, ranks above the player by political courtesy and sufferance: the player, during his hour on the stage, overtops the marquis in the part of an emperor or a king, which he better knows how to enact. Thus there seems to be a balance between natural and political nobility, which places us at least on a level with the live lumber of the court. Yes, truly, replied I, you are a match for one another, there is no gainsaying it. Bless their dear hearts! the players are not men of straw, as I foolishly believed, and

you have made my mouth water to serve such a worshipful fraternity. Well, then! resumed she, you have only to come back again in two days. That time will be sufficient to incline my mistress in your favour; I will speak up for you. She is a little under my influence; I do not fear bringing you under this roof.

I thanked Laura for her good dispositions. My gratitude took the readiest way to prove itself to her comprehension; and my tender thrillings expressed more than words. We had a pretty long conversation together, and it might have lasted till this time, if a little skipping fellow had not come to tell my nymph of the side scenes that Arsenia was inquiring for her. We parted. I left the house, in the sweet hope of soon living there scot-free; and my face was shown up again at the door in two days. I was looking out for you, said my accomplished scout, to assure you that you are a messmate at this house. Come, follow me; I will introduce you to my mistress. At these words, she led me into a suite of five or six rooms on a floor, in a regular gradation of costly furniture and tasteful equipment.

What luxury! what magnificence! I thought myself in presence of a vice-queen, or, to mend the poverty of the comparison, in a fairy palace, where all the riches of the earth were collected. In fact, there were the productions of many people and of many countries, so that one might describe this residence as the temple of a goddess, whither every traveller brought some rare product of his native land, as a votive offering. The divinity was reclining on a voluptuous satin sofa: she was lovely in my eyes, and pampered with the fumes of daily sacrifices. She was in a tempting dishabille, and her polished hands were elegantly busy about a new head-dress for her appearance that evening. Madam, said the abigail, here is that said steward; take my word for it, you will never get one more to your liking. Arsenia looked at me very inquisitively, and did not find me disagreeable. Why, this is something, Laura, cried she; a very smart youth truly; I foresee that we shall do very well together. Then directing her discourse to me, Young man, added she, you suit me to a hair, and I have only one observation to make: you will be pleased with me, if I am so with you. I answered that I should do my utmost to serve her to her heart's content. As I found that the bargain was

struck, I went immediately to fetch in my own little accommodations, and returned to take formal possession.

CHAPTER X

MUCH SUCH ANOTHER AS THE FOREGOING

It was near the time of the doors opening. My mistress told me to attend her to the theatre with Laura. We went into her dressing-room where she threw off her ordinary attire, and assumed a more splendid costume for the stage. When the performance began, Laura showed me the way, and seated herself by my side where I could see and hear the actors to advantage. They disgusted me for the most part, doubtless because Don Pompeyo had prejudiced me against them. Several of them were loudly applauded, but the fable of the pig would now and then come across my mind.

Laura told me the names of the actors and actresses as they made their entrances. Nor did she stop there, for the hussey gave some highly seasoned anecdotes into the bargain. Her characters were, crack-brain for this, impertinent fellow for that. That delicate sample of sin, who depends on her wantonness for her attractions, goes by the name of Rosarda: a bad speculation for the company! She ought to be sent with the next cargo to New Spain, she may answer the purpose of the viceroy. Take particular notice of that brilliant star now coming forward; that magnificent setting sun, increasing in bulk as its fires become less vivid. That is Casilda. If from that distant day when she first laid herself open to her lovers, she had required from each of them a brick to build a pyramid, like an ancient Egyptian princess, the edifice by this time would have mounted to the third heaven. In short, Laura tore all character to pieces by her scandal. Heaven forgive her wicked tongue! She blasphemed her own mistress.

And yet I must own my weakness. I was in love with the wench, though her morals were not strictly pure. She scandalized with so winning a malignity that one liked her the better for it. Off went the jill-flirt between the acts, to see if Arsenia wanted her; but instead of coming

straight back to her place, she amused herself behind the scenes, in laying herself out for the little flatteries of all the wheedling fellows. I dogged her once, and found that she had a very large acquaintance. No less than three players did I reckon up, who stopped to chat with her one after the other, and they seemed to be on a very improvable footing. This was not quite so well; and for the first time in my life I felt what jealousy was. I returned to my seat so absent and out of spirits, that Laura remarked it as soon as she came back to me. What is the matter, Gil Blas, said she with astonishment; what blue devil has perched upon your shoulder in my absence? You look gloomy and out of temper. My fairy queen, answered I, it is not without reason, you have an ugly kick in your gallop. I have observed you with the players. . . . . So, so! An admirable subject for a long face, interrupted she with a laugh. What! That is your trouble, is it? Why really! You are a very silly swain; but you will get better notions among us. You will fall by degrees into our easy manners. No jealousy, my dear creature, you will be completely laughed out of it in the theatrical world. The passion is scarcely known there. Fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, and cousins, are all upon a liberal plan of community, and often make a strange jumble of relationships.

After having warned me to take no umbrage, but to look at everything like a philosophical spectator, she vowed that I was the happy mortal who had found the way to her heart. She then declared that she should love me always, and only me. On this assurance, which a man might have doubted without criminal scepticism, I promised her not to be alarmed any more, and kept my word. I saw her, on that very evening, whisper and giggle with more men than one. At the end of the play we returned home with our mistress, whither Florimonde came soon after to supper, with three old noblemen and a player. Besides Laura and myself, the establishment consisted of a cook-maid, a coachman, and a little footboy. We all laboured in our respective vocations. The lady of the frying-pan, no less an adept than Dame Jacintha, was assisted in her cookery by the coachman. The waiting-woman and the little footboy laid the cloth, and I set out the sideboard, magnificently furnished with plate,

offered up at the shrine of our green-room goddess. There was every variety of wines, and I played the cup-bearer, to show my mistress the versatility of my talents. I sweated at the impudence of the actresses during supper; they gave themselves quality airs, and affected the tone of high life. Far from giving their guests all their style and titles, they did not even vouchsafe a simple "Your lordship," but called them familiarly by their proper names. To be sure, the old fools encouraged their vanity by forgetting their own distance. The player, for his part, in the habits of the heroic cast, lived on equal terms with them; he challenged them to drink, and in every respect took the upper hand. In good truth, said I to myself, while Laura was demonstrating the equality of the Marquis and the comedian during the day, she might have drawn a still stronger inference for the night, since they pass it so merrily in drinking together.

Arsenia and Florimonde were naturally frolicsome. A thousand broad hints escaped them, intermingled with small favours, and then a coquettish revolt at their own freedom, which were all seasoned exactly to the taste of these old sinners. While my mistress was entertaining one of them with a little harmless toying, her friend, between the other elders, had not taken the cue of Susanna. While I was contemplating this picture, which had but too many attractions for a knowing youth like me, the dessert was brought in. Then I set the bottles and glasses on the table, and made my escape to sup with Laura, who was waiting for me. How now! Gil Blas, said she, what do you think of those noblemen above-stairs? Doubtless, answered I, they are deeply smitten with Arsenia and Florimonde. No, replied she, they are old sensualists, who hang about our sex without any particular attachment. All they ask is some little frivolous compliance, and they are generous enough to pay well for the least trifle of amorous endearment. Heaven be praised, Florimonde and my mistress are at present without any serious engagements; I mean that they have no husband-like lovers, who expect to engross all the pleasures of a house, because they stand to the expenses. For my part, I am very glad of it: and maintain that a sensible woman of the world ought to refuse all such monopolies. Why take a master? It is better to support

an establishment by retail trade, than to confine one's self to chamber practice on such terms.

When Laura's tongue was wound up, and it was seldom down, words seemed to cost her nothing. What a glorious volubility! She told a thousand stories of the actresses belonging to the prince's company; and I gathered from her whole drift that I could not be better situated to take a scientific view of the cardinal vices. Unfortunately I was at an age when they inspire but little horror; and this abigail had the art of colouring her corruptions so lusciously as to hide their deformities and heighten their meretricious lure. She had not time to open the tenth part of her theatrical budget, for she did not talk more than three hours. The senators and the player went away with Florimonde, whom they saw safe home.

When they were gone, my mistress said to me—Here, Gil Blas, are ten pistoles to go to market to-morrow. Five or six of our gentlemen and ladies are to dine here, take care that we are well served. Madam, answered I, with this sum there shall be a banquet for the whole troop. My friend, replied Arsenia, correct your phraseology; you must say company, not troop. A troop of robbers, a troop of beggars, a troop of authors; but a company of comedians, especially when you have to mention the actors of Madrid. I begged my mistress's pardon for having used so disrespectful a term, and entreated her to excuse my ignorance. I protested that henceforward, when I spoke collectively of so august a body, I would always say the company.

CHAPTER XI

A THEATRICAL LIFE AND AN AUTHOR'S LIFE

I TOOK the field the next morning, to open my campaign as steward. It was a fish day; for which reason I bought some good fat chickens, rabbits, partridges, and every variety of game. As the gentlemen of the sock and buskin are not on the best possible terms with the church, they are not over-scrupulous in their observance of the rubric. I brought home provisions more than enough for a dozen portly gentlemen to have fasted on during a whole Lent. The

cook had a good morning's work. While she was getting dinner ready, Arsenia got up and spent the early part of the day at her toilet. At noon came two of the players, Signor Rosimiro and Signor Ricardo. Afterwards two actresses, Constance and Celinaura; then entered Florimonde, attended by a man who had all the appearance of a most spruce cavalier. He had his hair dressed in the most elegant manner, his hat set off with a fashionable plume, very tight breeches, and a shirt with a laced frill. His gloves and his handkerchief were in the hilt of his sword, and he wore his cloak with a grace altogether peculiar to himself.

With a prepossessing physiognomy and a good person, there was something extraordinary in the first blush of him. This gentleman, said I to myself, must be an original. I was not mistaken; his singularities were striking. On his entrance, he ran with open arms and embraced the company, male and female, one after another. His grimaces were more extravagant than any I had yet seen in this region of foppery. My prediction was not falsified by his discourse. He dwelt with fondness on every syllable he uttered, and pronounced his words in an emphatic tone, with gestures and glances artfully adapted to the subject. I had the curiosity to ask Laura who this strange figure might be. I forgive you, said she, this instance of an inquisitive disposition. It is impossible to see and to hear Signor Carlos Alonso de la Ventoleria for the first time, without having such a natural longing. I will paint him to the life. In the first place, he was originally a player. He left the stage through caprice, and has since repented in sober sadness of the step. Did you notice his dark hair? Every thread of it is pencilled, as well as his eyebrows and his whiskers. He was born in the reign of Saturn's father, in the age before the golden; but as there were no parish registers at that time, he avails himself of the primitive barbarism, and dates at least twenty centuries below the true epoch. Moreover, his self-sufficiency keeps pace with his antiquity. He passed the olympiads of his youth in the grossest ignorance; but taking a fancy to become learned about the Christian era, he engaged a private tutor, who taught him to spell in Greek and Latin. Nay, more, he knows by heart an infinite number of good stories, which he has given so often as genuine, that he actually begins to believe

them himself. They are eternally pressed into the service, and it may truly be said that his wit shines at the expense of his memory. He is thought to be a great actor. I am willing to believe it implicitly, but I must own he is not to my taste. He declaims here sometimes; and I have observed, among other defects, an affectation in his delivery, with a tremulousness of voice bordering on the antiquated and ridiculous.

Such was the portrait drawn by my abigail of this honorary spouter; and never was mortal of a more stately carriage. He prided himself too on being an agreeable companion. He was never at a loss for a commodity of trite remarks, which he delivered with an air of authority. On the other hand, the Thespian fraternity were not much addicted to silence. They began convassing their absent colleagues in a manner little consistent with charity, it must be owned; but this is a failing pardonable in players as well as in authors. The fire grew brisk and the satire personal. You have not heard, ladies, said Rosimiro, a new stroke of our dear brother Cesarino. This very morning he bought silk stockings, ribbons, and laces, and sent them to rehearsal by a little page, as a present from a countess. What a knavish trick! said Signor de la Ventoleria, with a smile made up of fatuity and conceit. In my time there was more honesty, we never thought of descending to such impositions. To be sure, women of fashion were tender of our inventive faculties, nor did they leave such purchases to be made out of our own pockets; it was their whim. By the honour of our house, said Ricardo, in the same strain, that whim of theirs is lasting, and if it were allowable to kiss and tell. . . . But one must be secret on these occasions, above all when persons of a certain rank are concerned.

Gentlemen, interrupted Florimonde, a truce, if you please, with your conquests and successes, they are known over the whole earth. Apropos of Ismene. It is said that the nobleman who has fooled away so much money upon her, has at length recovered his senses. Yes, indeed, exclaimed Constance; and I can tell you besides that she has lost, by the same stroke, a snug little hero of the counting-house, whose ruin would otherwise have been signed and sealed. I have the thing from the first hand. Her Mercury made

an unfortunate mistake, for he carried a tender invitation to each, and delivered them wrong. These were great losses, my darling, quoth Florimonde. Oh! as for that of the lord, replied Constance, it is a very trifling matter. The man of blood had almost run through his estate, but the little fellow with the pen behind his ear was but just coming into play. He had never been fleeced before, it is a pity he should have escaped so easily.

Such was the tenor of the conversation before dinner, and it was not much mended in its morality at table. As I should never have done with the recital of all their ribaldry and nonsense, the reader will excuse the omission, and pass on to the entrance of a poor devil, yclept an author, who called just before the cloth was taken away.

Our little footboy came and said to my mistress in an audible voice—Madam, a man in a dirty shirt, splashed up to his middle, with very much the look of a poet, saving your presence, wants to speak to you. Let him walk up, answered Arsenia. Keep your seats, gentlemen, it is only an author. To be sure so it was, one whose tragedy had been accepted, and he was bringing my mistress her part. His name was Pedro de Moya. On coming into the room he made five or six low bows to the company, who neither rose nor took the least notice of him. Arsenia just returned his superabundant civilities with a slight inclination of the head. He came forward with tremor and embarrassment. He dropped his gloves and let his hat fall. He ventured to pick them up again, then advanced towards my mistress, and presenting to her a paper with more ceremony than a defendant an affidavit to the judge of the court—Madam, said he, have the goodness to receive under your protection the part I take the liberty of offering you. She stretched out her hand for it with cold and contemptuous indifference; nor did she condescend even to notice the compliment by a look.

But our author was not disheartened. Seizing this opportunity to distribute the cast, he gave one character to Rosimiro and another to Florimonde, who treated him just as genteelly as Arsenia had done. On the contrary, the low comedian, a very pleasant fellow, as those gentlemen for the most part affect to be, insulted him with the most cutting sarcasms. Pedro de Moya was not made of stone.

Yet he dared not take up the aggressor, lest his piece should suffer for it. He withdrew without saying a word, but stung to the quick, as it seemed to me, by his reception. He could not fail, in the transports of his anger, mentally to apostrophize the players as they deserved: and the players when he was gone, began to talk of authors in return with infinite deference and kindness. It should seem, said Florimonde, as if Signor de Moya did not go away very well pleased.

Well! madam, cried Rosimiro, and why should you trouble yourself about that? Are we to study the feelings of authors? If we were to admit them upon equal terms, it would only be the way to spoil them. I know that contemptible squad; I know them of old: they would soon forget their distance. There is no dealing with them but as slaves; and as for tiring their patience, never fear that. Though they may take themselves off in a pet sometimes, the itch of writing brings them back again; and they are raised to the third heaven, if we will but condescend to support their pieces. You are right, said Arsenia; we never lose an author till we have made his fortune. When that is done, as soon as we have provided for the ungrateful devils, they get to be in good case, and then they run restive. Luckily the manager does not break his heart after them, and one is just as good as another to the public.

These liberal and sagacious remarks met with their full share of approbation. It was carried unanimously that authors, though treated rather too scurvily behind the scenes, were on the whole the obliged persons. These fretters of an hour upon the stage ranked the inhabitant of Parnassus below themselves; and malice could not degrade him lower.

CHAPTER XII

GIL BLAS ACQUIRES A RELISH FOR THE THEATRE, AND TAKES A FULL SWING OF ITS PLEASURES, BUT SOON BECOMES DISGUSTED

The party sat at table till it was time to go to the theatre. I went after them, and saw the play again that evening. I took such delight in it, that I was for attending every day.

I never missed, and by degrees got accustomed to the actors. Such is the force of habit. I was particularly delighted with those who were most artificial and unnatural; nor was I singular in my taste.

The beauties of composition affected me much on the same principle as the excellence of representation. There were some pieces with which I was enraptured. I liked, among others, those which brought all the cardinals or the twelve peers of France upon the stage. I got hold of striking passages in these incomparable performances. I recollect that in two days I learnt by heart a whole play, called, *The Queen of Flowers*. The Rose, who was the queen, had the Violet for her maid of honour, and the Jessamin for her prime minister. I could conceive nothing more elegant or refined: such productions seemed to be the triumph of our Spanish wit and invention.

I was not content to store my memory and discipline my mind with the choicest selections from these dramatic masterpieces: but I was bent on polishing my taste to the highest perfection. To secure this grand object, I listened with greedy ears to every word which fell from the lips of the players. If they commended a piece, I was ravished by it: but suppose they pronounced it bad? why, then I maintained that it was infernal stuff. I conceived that they must determine the merits of a play, as a jeweller the water of a diamond. And yet the tragedy by Pedro de Moya was eminently successful, though they had predicted its entire miscarriage. This, however, was no disparagement of their critical skill in my estimation; and I had rather believe the audience to be divested of common sense, than doubt the infallibility of the company. But they assured me, on all hands, that their judgments were usually confirmed by the rule of contraries. It seemed to be a maxim with them, to set their faces point blank against the taste of the public; and as a proof of this, there were a thousand cases in point of unexpected successes and failures. All these testimonies were scarcely sufficient to undeceive me.

I shall never forget what happened one day at the first representation of a new comedy. The performers had pronounced it uninteresting and tedious; they had even prophesied that it would not be heard to the end. Under this impression, they got through the first act, which was loudly

applauded. This was very astonishing! They played the second act; the audience liked it still better than the first. The actors were confounded. What the devil, said Rosimiro, this comedy succeeds! At last they went on in the third act, which rose as a third act ought to rise. I am quite thrown upon my back, said Ricardo; we thought this piece would not be relished; and all the world are mad after it. Gentlemen, said one of the players archly, it is because we happened accidentally to overlook all the wit.

From this time I held my opinion no longer of the players as competent judges, and began to appreciate their merit more truly than they had estimated that of the authors. All the lampoons which were current about them were fully justified. The actors and actresses ran riot on the applauses of the town, and stood so high in their own conceit, as to think that they conferred a favour by appearing on the boards. I was shocked at their public misconduct; but unfortunately reconciled myself too easily to their private manners, and plunged into debauchery. How could I do otherwise? Every word they uttered was poison in the ears of youth, and every scene that was presented, an alluring picture of corruption. Had I been a stranger to what passed with Casilda, with Constance, and with the other actresses, Arsenia's house alone would have been sufficient for my ruin. Besides the old noblemen of whom I have spoken, there came thither young debauchees of fashion, who forestalled their inheritances by the disinterested mediation of money-lenders: and sometimes we had officers under government, who were so far from receiving fees, as at their public boards, that they paid most exorbitant ones for the privilege of mixing with such worshipful society.

Florimonde, who lived at next door, dined and supped with Arsenia every day. Their long intimacy surprised every one. Coquets were not thought usually to maintain so good an understanding with each other. It was concluded that they would quarrel, sooner or later, about some paramour; but such reasoners could not see into the hearts of these exemplary friends. They were united in the bonds of indissoluble love. Instead of harbouring jealousy, like other women, they had everything in common. They had rather divide the plunder of mankind, than childishly fall out, and contend for trumpery, as hearts and affections.

Laura, after the example of these two illustrious partners, turned the fresh season of youth to the best advantage. She had told me that I should see strange doings. And yet I did not take up the jealous part. I had promised to adopt the principles of the company on that score. For some days I kept my thoughts to myself. I only just took the liberty of asking her the names of the men whom she favoured with her private ear. She always told me that they were uncles or cousins. From what a prolific family was she sprung! King Priam had no luck in propagation, compared with her ancestors. Nor did this precious abigail confine herself to her uncles and cousins: she went now and then to lay a trap for unwary aliens, and personate the widow of quality under the auspices of the discreet old dowager above mentioned. In short Laura, to hit off her character exactly, was just as young, just as pretty, and just as loose as her mistress, who had no other advantage over her than that of figuring in a more public capacity.

I was borne down by the torrent for three weeks, and ran the career of dissipation in my turn. But I must at the same time say for myself, that in the midst of pleasure I frequently felt the still small voice of conscience, arising from the impression of a serious education, which mixed gall in the Circean cup. Riot could not altogether get the better of remorse: on the contrary, the pangs of the last grew keener with the more shameful indulgence of the first; and, by a happy effect of my temperament, the disorders of a theatrical life began to make me shudder. Ah! wretch, said I to myself, is it thus that you make good the hopes of your family? Is it not enough to have thwarted their pious intentions, by not following your destined course of life as an instructor of youth? Need your condition of a servant hinder you from living decently and soberly? Are such monsters of iniquity fit companions for you? Envy, hatred, and avarice are predominant here; intemperance and idleness have purchased the fee-simple there: the pride of some is aggravated into the most barefaced impudence, and modesty is turned out of doors, by the common consent of all. The business is settled: I will not live any longer with the seven deadly sins.

BOOK THE FOURTH

CHAPTER I

GIL BLAS NOT BEING ABLE TO RECONCILE HIMSELF TO THE MORALS OF THE ACTRESSES, QUITS ARSENIA, AND GETS INTO A MORE REPUTABLE SERVICE

A SURVIVING spark of honour and of religion, in the midst of so general depravity, made me resolve not only to leave Arsenia, but even to abjure all commerce with Laura, whom yet I could not cease to love, though I was well aware of her daily inconstancy. Happy the man who can thus profit by those appeals, which occasionally interrupt the headlong course of his pleasures! One fine morning, I made up my bundle; and, without reckoning with Arsenia, who indeed owed me next to nothing, without taking leave of my dear Laura, I burst from that mansion, which smelt of brimstone and fire reserved for the wicked. I had no sooner taken so virtuous a step, than providence interfered in my behalf. I met the steward of my late master, Don Matthias, and greeted him: he knew me again at once, and stopped to inquire where I lived. I answered that I had just left my place; that after staying near a month with Arsenia, whose manners did not at all suit me, I was come away by a sudden impulse of virtue, to save my innocence. The steward, just as if he had been himself of a religious cast, commended my scruples, and offered me a place much to my advantage, since I was so chaste and honest a youth. He kept his word, and introduced me on that very day into the family of Don Vincent de Gusman, with whose agent he was acquainted.

I could not have got into a better service; nor did I repent in the sequel of having accepted the situation. Don Vincent was a very rich old nobleman, who had lived many years unencumbered with lawsuits or with a wife. The physicians had removed the last plague out of the way, in their attempts to rid her of a cough, which might have lasted a great while longer, if the remedies had not been more fatal than the disease. Far from thinking of the holy state a

second time, he gave himself up entirely to the education of his only daughter Aurora, who was then entering her twenty-sixth year, and might pass for an accomplished person. With beauty above the common, she had an excellent and highly cultivated understanding. Her father was a poor creature as to intellect; but he possessed the happy talent of looking well after his affairs. One fault he had, of a kind excusable in old men: he was an incessant talker, especially about war and fighting. If that string was unfortunately touched in his presence, in a moment he blew his heroic trumpet, and his hearers might think themselves lucky if they compounded for a gazette extraordinary of two seiges and three battles. As he had spent two-thirds of his life in the service, his memory was an inexhaustible depôt of various facts; but the patience of the listeners did not always keep pace with the perseverance of the relater. The stories, sufficiently prolix in themselves, were still further spun out by stuttering; so that the manner was still less happy than the matter. In all other respects, I never met with a nobleman of a more amiable character: his temper was even; he was neither obstinate nor capricious; the general alternative of men in the higher ranks of life. Though a good economist, he lived like a gentleman. His establishment was composed of several men servants, and three women in waiting on Aurora. I soon discovered that the steward of Don Matthias had procured me a good post, and my only anxiety was to establish myself firmly in it. I took all possible pains to feel the ground under my feet, and to study the characters of the whole household: then regulating my conduct by my discoveries, I was not long in ingratiating myself with my master and all the servants.

I had been with Don Vincent about a month, when it struck me that his daughter was very particular in her notice of me above all the servants in the family. Whenever her eyes happened accidentally to meet mine, they seemed to be suffused with a certain partial complacency, which did not enter into her silent communications with the vulgar. Had it not been for my haunts among the coxcombs of the theatrical tribe and their hangers-on, it would never have entered into my head that Aurora should throw away a thought on me: but my brain had been a

little turned among those gentry, from whose libertine suspicions ladies of the noblest birth are not always held sacred. If, said I, those chronicles of the age are to be believed, fancy and high blood lead women of quality a dance, in which they sometimes join hands with unequal partners: how do I know but my young mistress may caper to a tune of my piping? But no: it cannot be so, neither. This is not one of your Messalinas, who, derogating from the loftiness of ancestry, unworthily let down their regards to the dust, and sully their pure honour without a blush: but rather one of those virtuously apprehensive, yet tender-hearted girls, who encircle their softness within the insurmountable pale of delicacy; yet think it no tampering with chastity, to inspire and cherish a sentimental flame, interesting to the heart without being dangerous to the morals.

Such were my ideas of my mistress, without knowing exactly whether they were right or wrong. And yet when we met, she was continually caught with a smile of satisfaction on her countenance. Without passing for a fop, a man might give in to such flattering appearances; and a philosophical apathy was not to be expected from me. I conceived Aurora to have been deeply smitten with my irresistible attractions; and looked on myself henceforth in the light of a favoured attendant, whose servitude was to be sweetened by the balmy infusion of love. To appear in some measure less unworthy of the blessings, which propitious fortune had kept in store for me, I began to take better care of my person than I had done heretofore. I laid out my slender stock of money in linen, pomatums, and essences. The first thing in the morning was to prank up and perfume myself, so as not to be in an undress in case of being sent for into the presence of my mistress. With these attentions to personal elegance and other dexterous strokes in the art of pleasing, I flattered myself that the moment of my bliss was not very distant.

Among Aurora's women there was one who went by the name of Ortiz. This was an old dowager, who had been a fixture in Don Vincent's family for more than twenty years. She had been about his daughter from her childhood, and still held the office of duenna; but she no longer performed the invidious part of the duty. On the contrary,

instead of blazoning, as formerly, Aurora's little indiscretions, her skill was now employed in throwing them into shade. One evening, Dame Ortiz, having watched her opportunity of speaking to me without observation, said in a low voice, that if I was close and trustworthy, I had only to be in the garden at midnight, when a scene would be laid open in which I should not be sorry to be an actor. I answered the duenna, pressing her hand significantly, that I would not fail, and we parted in a hurry for fear of a surprise. How the hours lagged from this moment till supper-time, though we supped very early! Then again, from supper to my master's bed-time! It should seem as if the march of the whole family was timed to a *largo* movement. By way of helping forward the fidgets, when Don Vincent withdrew to his chamber, the army was put on the war establishment, and we were obliged to fight the campaigns in Portugal over again, though my ears had not recovered from the din of the last cannonade. But a favour, from which I had hitherto made my escape, was reserved for this eventful evening. He repeated the army list from beginning to end, with copious digressions on the exploits of those officers who had distinguished themselves in his time. Oh my poor tympanum! It was almost cracked before we got to the end. Time, however, will wear out even an old man's story, and he went to bed. I immediately went to my own little chamber, whence there was a way into the garden by a private staircase. I depended on my purchase of perfumery for overcoming the effluvia of the day's drudgery, and put on a clean shirt highly scented. When every invention had been pressed into the service to render my person worthy of its destiny, and cherish the fondness of my mistress, I went to the appointment.

Ortiz was not there. I concluded that, tired of waiting for me, she had gone back to her chamber, and that the happy moment of philandering was over. I laid all the blame on Don Vincent; but just as I was singing Te Deum backwards for his campaigns, I heard the clock strike ten. To be sure it must be wrong! It could not be less than one o'clock. Yet I was so egregiously out in my reckoning, that full a quarter of an hour afterwards, I counted ten upon my fingers by the clock at next door. Vastly well,

thought I to myself, I have only two complete hours to ventilate my passion here *al fresco*. At least they shall not complain of me for want of punctuality. What shall I do with myself till twelve? Suppose we take a turn about this garden and settle our cues in the delicious drama just going to be brought on the stage; it is my first appearance in so principal a character. I am not yet sufficiently well read in the crotchets of your quality dames. I know how to tickle a girl in a stuff gown, or an actress. You swagger up to them with an easy, impudent assurance, and pop the question without making any bones of it. But one must take a female of condition on a very different tack. It seems to me, that in this case the happy swain must be well bred, attentive, tender, respectful, without degenerating into bashfulness. Instead of taking his happiness by storm, he must plant his amorous desires in ambuscade, and wait till the garrison is asleep, and the outworks defenceless.

Thus it was that I argued, and such were the preconcerted plans of my campaign with Aurora. After a few tedious minutes, according to my calculation, I was to experience the ecstasy of finding myself at the feet of that lovely creature, and pouring forth a torrent of impassioned nonsense. I scraped together in my memory all the clap-traps in our stock-plays, which were most successful with the audience, and might best set off my pretensions to spirit and gallantry. I trusted to my own adroitness for the application, and hoped, after the example of some players in the list of my acquaintance, bringing only a stock of memory into the trade, to deal upon credit for my wit. While my imagination was engrossed by these thoughts, which kept my impatience at bay much more successfully than the commentaries of my modern Cæsar, I heard the clock strike eleven. This was some encouragement, and I fell back to my meditations, sometimes sauntering carelessly about, and sometimes throwing myself at my length on the turf, in a bower at the bottom of the garden. At length it struck twelve, the long-expected hour, big with my high destiny. Some seconds after, Ortiz, as punctual as myself though less impatient, made her appearance. Signor Gil Blas, said she, accosting me, how long have you been here? Two hours, answered I. Indeed! Truly, replied she, laughing, you are very exact; there is a pleasure in making nocturnal

assignations with you. Yet you may assure yourself, continued she more gravely, that you cannot pay too dear for such good fortune as that of which I am the messenger. My mistress wants to have some private talk with you. I shall not anticipate what may be the subject, that is a secret which you must learn from no lips but her own. Follow me; I will show you into her chamber. With these words the duenna took me by the hand, and led me mysteriously into her lady's apartment through a little door, of which she had the key.

CHAPTER II

AURORA'S RECEPTION OF GIL BLAS. THEIR CONVERSATION

I FOUND Aurora in an undress. I saluted her in the most respectful manner, and threw as much elegance into my attitude as I had to throw. She received me with the most winning affability, made me sit down by her against all my remonstrances, and told her ambassadress to go into another room. After this opening, which seemed highly encouraging to my cause, she entered upon the business. Gil Blas, said she, you must have perceived how favourably I have regarded and distinguished you from all the rest of my father's servants; and though my looks had not betrayed my partial dispositions towards you, my proceeding of this night would leave you no room to doubt them.

I did not give her time to say a word more. It struck me, that as a man of feeling, I ought to spare her trembling diffidence the cruel necessity of explaining her sentiments in more direct terms. I rose from my chair in a transport, and, throwing myself at Aurora's feet, like a tragedy hero of the Grecian stage when he supplicates the heroine "by her knees," exclaimed in a declamatory tone—Ah! Madam, could it be possible that Gil Blas, hitherto the whirligig of fortune and football of embattled nature, should have called down upon his head the exquisite felicity of inspiring sentiments. . . . . Do not speak so loud, interrupted my mistress with a laugh of mingled apprehension and ridicule, you will wake my women who sleep in the adjoining chamber. Get up, take your seat, and hear me out without putting in a word. Yes, Gil Blas, pursued she, resuming

her gravity, you have my best wishes; and to show you how deep you are in my good graces, I will confide to you a secret on which depends the repose of my life. I am in love with a young gentleman, possessing every charm of person and face, and noble by birth. His name is Don Lewis Pacheco. I have seen him occasionally in the public walks and at the theatre, but I have never conversed with him. I do not even know what his private character may be, or what bad qualities he may have. It is on this subject that I wish to be informed. I stand in need of a person to inquire diligently into his morals, and give me a true and particular account. I make choice of you. Surely I run no risk in entrusting you with this commission. I hope that you will acquit yourself with dexterity and prudence, and that I shall never repent of giving you my confidence.

My mistress concluded thus, and waited for my answer to her proposal. I had been disconcerted in the first instance at so disagreeable a mistake; but I soon recovered my scattered senses, and surmounting the confusion which rashness always occasions when it is unlucky, I exposed to sale such a cargo of zeal for the lady's interests, I devoted myself with so martyr-like an enthusiasm to her service, that if she did not absolutely forget my silly vanity in the thought of having pleased her, at least she had reason to believe that I knew how to make amends for a piece of folly. I asked only two days to bring her a satisfactory account of Don Lewis. After which Dame Ortiz, answering the bell, showed me the way back into the garden, and said, on taking leave, Good-night, Gil Blas. I need not caution you to be in time at the next appointment. I have sufficient experience of your punctuality on these occasions.

I returned to my chamber, not without some little mortification at finding my voluptuous anticipations all divested of even their ideal sweetness. I was nevertheless sufficiently in my senses to reflect soberly that it was more in my element to be the trusty scout of my mistress than her lover. I even thought that this adventure might lead to something further; that the middle men in the trade of love usually pocket a tolerable percentage; and went to bed with the resolution of doing whatever Aurora required of me. For this purpose I went abroad the next morning. The resi-

dence of so distinguished a personage as Don Lewis was not difficult to find out. I made my enquiries about him in the neighbourhood, but the people who came in my way could not satisfy my curiosity to the full, so that it was necessary to resume my search diligently on the following day. I was in better luck. I met a lad of my acquaintance by chance in the street, we stopped for a little gossip. There passed by in the very nick one of his friends, who came up and told him that he was just turned away from the family of Don Joseph Pacheco, Don Lewis's father, about a paltry remnant of wine, which he had been accused of drinking. I would not lose so fair an occasion of learning all I wanted to know, and plied my questions so successfully as to go home with much self-complacency, at my punctual performance of my engagements with my mistress. It was on the coming night that I was to see her again at the same hour and in the same manner as the first time. I was not in such a confounded hurry this evening. Far from writhing with impatience under the prolixity of my old commander, I led him on to the charge. I waited for midnight with the greatest indifference in the world, and it was not till all the clocks within ear-shot had struck that I crept down into the garden, without any nonsense of pomatum and perfumery. That foppery was completely cured.

At the place of meeting I found the very faithful duenna, who sneeringly reproached me with a defalcation in my zeal. I made her no answer, but suffered myself to be conducted into Aurora's chamber. She asked me, as soon as I made my appearance, whether I had gained any intelligence of Don Lewis. Yes, madam, said I, and you shall have the sum total in two words. I must first tell you, that he will soon set out for Salamanca, to finish his studies. The young gentleman is brim full of honour and probity. As for valour, he cannot be deficient there, since he is a man of birth and a Castilian. Besides this, he has an infinite deal of wit, and is very agreeable in his manners; but there is one thing which can scarcely be to your liking. He is pretty much in the fashion of our young nobility here at court—exemplarily catholic in his devotions to the fair. Have you not heard that at his age he has already been tenant at will to two actresses? What is it you tell me? replied Aurora. What shocking conduct!

But do you know for certain, Gil Blas, that he leads so dissolute a life? Oh! there is no doubt of it, madam, rejoined I. A servant, turned off this morning, told me so, and servants are very plain dealers when the failings of their masters are the topic. Besides, he keeps company with Don Alexo Segiar, Don Antonio Centellés, and Don Fernando de Gamboa; that single circumstance proves his libertinism with all the force of demonstration. It is enough, Gil Blas, said my mistress with a sigh; on your report I am determined to struggle with my unworthy passion. Though it has already struck deep root in my heart, I do not despair of tearing it forcibly from its bed. Go, added she, putting into my hands a small purse, none of the lightest, take this for your pains. Beware of betraying my secret. Consider it as entrusted to your silence.

I assured my mistress that she might be perfectly easy on that score, for I was the Harpocrates of confidential servants. After this compliment to myself, I withdrew with no small eagerness to investigate the contents of the purse. There were twenty pistoles. It struck me all at once that Aurora would surely have given me more had I been the bearer of pleasant tidings, since she paid so handsomely for a blank in the lottery. I was sorry not to have adopted the policy of the pleaders in the courts, who sometimes paint the cheek of truth when her natural complexion is inclined to be cadaverous. It was a pity to have stifled an amour in the birth which might in its growth have been so profitable. Yet I had the comfort of finding myself reimbursed the expense so unseasonably incurred in perfumery and washes.

CHAPTER III

A GREAT CHANGE AT DON VINCENT'S. AURORA'S STRANGE RESOLUTION

It happened soon after this adventure that Signor Don Vincent fell sick. Independent of his very advanced age, the symptoms of his disorder appeared in so formidable a shape that a fatal termination was but too probable. From the beginning of his illness he was attended by two of the most eminent physicians in Madrid. One was Doctor An-

dros, and the other Doctor Oquetos. They considered the case with due solemnity; and both agreed, after a strict investigation, that the humours were in a state of mutiny, but this was the only thing about which they did agree. The proper practice, said Andros, is to purge the humours, though raw, with all possible expedition, while they are in a violent agitation of flux and reflux, for fear of their fixing upon some noble part. Oquetos maintained, on the contrary, that we must wait till the humours were ripened before it would be safe to go upon purgatives. But your method, replied the first speaker, is directly in the teeth of the rules laid down by the prince of medicine. Hippocrates recommends purging in the most burning fever from the very first attack, and says in plain terms that no time is to be lost in purging when the humours are in οργασμος, that is to say, in a state of fermentation. Ay! there is your mistake, replied Oquetos. Hippocrates by the word οργασμος does not mean the fermentation, he means rather the concoction of the humours.

Thereupon our doctors got heated. One quotes the Greek text, and cites all the authors who have explained it in his sense; the other, trusting to a Latin translation, takes up the controversy in a still more positive tone. Which of the two to believe? Don Vincent was not the man to decide that question. In the mean time, finding himself obliged to choose, he gave his confidence to the party who had dispatched the greatest number of patients—I mean the elder of the two. Andros, the younger, immediately withdrew, not without flinging out a few satirical taunts at his senior on the οργασμος. Here then was Oquetos triumphant. As he was a professor of the Sangrado school, he began by bleeding copiously, waiting till the humours were ripened before he went upon purgatives. But death, fearing, no doubt, lest this reserve of purgatives should turn the fortunes of the day, got the start of the concoction, and secured his victory over my master by a coup-de-main. Such was the final close of Signor Don Vincent, who had lost his life because his physician did not know Greek.

Aurora having buried her father with a pomp suited to the dignity of his birth, administered to his effects. Having the whole arrangement of everything in her own breast, she discharged some of the servants with rewards proportioned

to their services, and soon retired to her castle on the Tagus, between Sacedon and Buendia. I was among the number of those whom she kept, and who made part of her country establishment. I had even the good fortune to become a principal agent in the plot. In spite of my faithful report on the subject of Don Lewis, she still harboured a partiality for that bewitching young fellow; or rather, for want of spirit to combat her passion in the first instance, she surrendered at discretion. There was no longer any need of taking precautions to speak with me in private. Gil Blas, said she with a sigh, I can never forget Don Lewis. Let me make what effort I will to banish him from my thoughts, he is present to them without intermission, not as you have described him, plunged in every variety of licentious riot, but just what my fancy would paint him—tender, loving, constant. She betrayed considerable emotion in uttering these words, and could not help shedding tears. My fountains were very near playing from mere sympathy. There was no better way of paying my court than by appearing sensibly touched at her distress. My friend, continued she, after having wiped her lovely eyes, your nature is evidently cast in a benevolent mould; and I am so well satisfied with your zeal that it shall not go unrewarded. Your assistance, my dear Gil Blas, is more necessary to me than ever. You must be made acquainted with a plan which engrosses all my thoughts, though it will appear strangely eccentric. You are to know that I mean to set out for Salamanca as soon as possible. There my design is to assume the disguise of a fashionable young fellow, and to make acquaintance with Pacheco under the name of Don Felix. I shall endeavour to gain his confidence and friendship, and lead the conversation incidentally to the subject of Aurora de Guzman, for whose cousin I shall pass. He may perhaps express a wish to see her, and there is the point on which I expect the interest to turn. We will have two apartments in Salamanca. In one I shall be Don Felix, in the other, Aurora; and I flatter myself that by presenting my person before Don Lewis, sometimes under the semblance of a man, sometimes in all the natural and artificial attractions of my own sex, I may bring him by little and little to the proposed end of my stratagem. I am perfectly aware that my project is extravagant in the highest degree, but my passion

drives me headlong; and the innocence of my intentions renders me insensible to all compunctious feelings of virgin apprehension respecting so hazardous a step.

I was exactly in the same mind with Aurora respecting the extravagance of her scheme. Yet, unseasonable as it might seem to reflecting persons like myself, there was no occasion for me to play the schoolmaster. On the contrary, I began to practise all the arts of a thorough-bred special pleader, and undertook to magnify this hair-brained pursuit into a piece of incomparable wit and spirit, without the least tincture of imprudence. This was highly gratifying to my mistress. Lovers like to have their rampant fancies tickled. We no longer considered this rash enterprise in any other light than as a play, of which the characters were to be properly cast, and the business dramatically arranged. The actors were chosen out of our own domestic establishment, and the parts distributed without secret jealousy or open rupture, but then we were not players by profession. It was determined that Dame Ortiz should personate Aurora's aunt, under the name of Donna Kimena de Guzman, with a valet and waiting-maid by way of attendance; and that Aurora, with the swashing outside of a gay spark, was to take me for her valet-de-chambre, with one of her women disguised as a page, to be more immediately about her person. The drama thus filled up we returned to Madrid, where we understood Don Lewis still to be, though it was not likely to be long till his departure for Salamanca. We got up with all possible haste the dresses and decorations of our wild comedy. When they were in complete order, my mistress had them packed up carefully, that they might come out in all their gloss and newness on the rising of the curtain. Then, leaving the care of her family to her steward, she began her journey in a coach drawn by four mules, and travelled towards the kingdom of Leon, with those of her household who had some part to play in the piece.

We had already crossed Old Castille, when the axletree of the coach gave way. The accident happened between Avila and Villaflor, at the distance of three or four hundred yards from a castle near the foot of a mountain. Night was coming on, and the measure of our troubles seemed to be heaped up and overflowing. But there passed accidentally

by us a countryman, by whose assistance we were relieved from our difficulties. He acquainted us that the castle yonder belonged to Donna Elvira, widow of Don Pedro de Penarés; at the same time giving us so favourable a character of that lady, that my mistress sent me to the castle with a request of a night's lodging. Elvira did not disgrace the good word of the countryman. She received me with an air of hospitality, and returned such an answer to my compliment as I wished to carry back. We all went to the castle, whither the mules dragged the carriage with considerable difficulty. At the gate we met the widow of Don Pedro, who came out to meet my mistress. I shall pass over in silence the reciprocal civilities which were exchanged on this occasion, in compliance with the usage of the polite world. I shall only say that Elvira was a lady rather advanced in years, but remarkably well bred, with an address superior to that of most women in doing the honours of her house. She led Aurora into a sumptuous apartment, where, leaving her to rest herself for a short time, she looked after everything herself, and left nothing undone which could in the least contribute to our comfort. Afterwards, when supper was ready, she ordered it to be served up in Aurora's chamber, where they sat down to table together. Don Pedro's widow was not of a description to cast a slur on her own hospitalities, by assuming an air of abstraction or sullenness. Her temper was gay, and her conversation lively without levity; for her ideas were dignified, and her expressions select. Nothing could exceed her wit, accompanied by a peculiarly fine turn of thought. Aurora appeared as much to be delighted as myself. They became sworn friends, and mutually engaged in a regular correspondence. As our carriage could not be repaired till the following day, and we should have encountered some perils by setting out late at night, it was determined that we should take up our abode at the castle till the damage was made good. All the arrangements were in the first style of elegance, and our lodgings were correspondent to the magnificence of the establishment in other respects.

The day after, my mistress discovered new charms in Elvira's conversation. They dined in a large hall, where there were several pictures. One among the rest was distinguished for its admirable execution, but the subject was

highly tragic. A principal figure was a man of superior mien, lying lifeless on his back, and bathed in his own blood; yet in the very embraces of death he wore a menacing aspect. At a little distance from him you might see a young lady in a different posture, though stretched likewise on the ground. She had a sword plunged in her bosom, and was giving up her last sighs, at the same time casting her dying glances at a young man who seemed to suffer a mortal pang at losing her. The painter had besides charged his picture with a figure which did not escape my notice. It was an old man of a venerable physiognomy, sensibly touched with the objects which struck his sight, and equally alive with the young man to the impressions of the melancholy scene. It might be said that these images of blood and desolation affected both the spectators with the same astonishment and grief, but that the outward demonstrations of their inward sentiments were different. The old man, sunk in a profound melancholy, looked as if he was bowed down to the ground; while the youth mingled something like the extravagance of despair with the tears of affliction. All these circumstances were depicted with touches so characteristic and affecting, that we could not take our eyes off the performance. My mistress desired to know the subject of the piece. Madam, said Elvira, it is a faithful delineation of the misfortunes sustained by my family. This answer excited Aurora's curiosity; and she testified so strong a desire to learn the particulars, that the widow of Don Pedro could do no otherwise than promise her the satisfaction she desired. This promise, made before Ortiz, her two fellow-servants, and myself, rooted us to the spot on which we were listening to their former conversation. My mistress would have sent us away; but Elvira, who saw plainly that we were dying with eagerness to be present at the explanation of the picture, had the goodness to desire us to stay, alleging at the same time that the story she had to relate was not of a nature to enjoin secrecy. After a moment's recollection, she began her recital to the following effect:

CHAPTER IV

THE FATAL MARRIAGE; A NOVEL

ROGER, king of Sicily, had a brother and a sister. His brother, by name Mainfroi, rebelled against him, and kindled a war in the kingdom, bloody in its immediate effects, and portentous in its future consequences. But it was his fate to lose two battles, and to fall into the king's hands. The punishment of his revolt extended no further than the loss of liberty. This act of clemency served only to make Roger pass for a barbarian in the estimation of the disaffected party among his subjects. They contended that he had saved his brother's life only to wreak his vengeance on him by tortures the more merciless because protracted. People in general, on better grounds, transferred the blame of Mainfroi's harsh treatment while in prison to his sister Matilda. That princess had, in fact, cherished a long-rooted hatred against this prince, and was indefatigable in her persecutions during his whole life. She died in a very short time after him, and her premature fate was considered as the retribution of a just providence for her disregard of those sentiments implanted by nature for the best purposes.

Mainfroi left behind him two sons. They were yet in their childhood. Roger had a kind of lurking desire to get rid of them, under the apprehension lest, when arrived at a more advanced age, the wish of avenging their father might hurry them to the revival of a faction which was not so entirely overthrown as to be incapable of originating new intrigues in the state. He communicated his purpose to the senator Leontio Siffredi, his minister, who diverted him from his bloody thoughts by undertaking the education of Prince Enriquez, the eldest, and recommending the care of the younger, by name Don Pedro, to the constable of Sicily, as a trusty counsellor and loyal servant. Roger, assured that his nephews would be trained up by these two men in principles of due submission to the royal authority, gave up the reins of guardianship to their control, and himself took charge of his niece Constance. She was of the same age with

Enriquez, and only daughter of the princess Matilda. He allowed her an establishment of female attendants, and of masters in every branch of the politer studies, so that nothing was wanting either to her instruction or her state.

Leontio Siffredi had a castle at the distance of less than two leagues from Palermo, in a spot named Belmonte. There it was that this minister exerted all his talents and diligence, to render Enriquez worthy of one day ascending the throne of Sicily. From the first, he discovered dispositions so amiable in that prince, that his attachment became as strong as if he had no child of his own. He had, however, two daughters—Blanche, the first-born, one year younger than the prince, was armed at all points with the weapons of a most perfect beauty. Her sister Portia was still in her cradle. The mother had died in child-bed of this youngest. Blanche and Prince Enriquez conceived a reciprocal affection as soon as they were alive to the influence of love: but they were not allowed to improve their acquaintance into familiar intercourse. The prince nevertheless found the means of occasionally eluding the prudential vigilance of his guardian. He knew sufficiently well how to avail himself of those precious moments, and prevailed so far with Siffredi's daughter, as to gain her consent to the execution of a project which he meditated. It happened precisely at this time that Leontio was obliged by the king's order to take a journey into one of the most remote provinces in the island. During his absence Enriquez got an opening made in the wall of his apartment, which led into Blanche's chamber. This opening was concealed by a sliding shutter, so exactly corresponding with the wainscot, and so closely fitting in with the ceiling and the floor, that the most suspicious eye could not have detected the contrivance. A skilful workman, whom the prince had gained over to his interests, helped him to this private communication with equal speed and secrecy.

The enamoured Enriquez having obtained this inlet into his mistress's chamber, sometimes availed himself of his privilege; but he never took advantage of her partiality. Imprudent as it may well be thought, to admit of a secret entrance into her apartment, it was only on the express and reiterated assurance that none but the most innocent favours should be requested at her hands. One night he found her

you as my father. I shall make it my glory to be governed by your counsels, and you shall reign in Sicily with a sway paramount to my own. With these words, advancing to the standish and taking a blank sheet of paper, he wrote his name at the bottom. What are you doing, sir? said Siffredi. Proving my gratitude and my esteem, answered Enriquez. Then the prince presented the paper to Blanche, and said—Accept, madam, this pledge of my faith, and of the empire with which I invest you over my thoughts and actions. Blanche received it with a blush, and made this answer to the prince—I acknowledge with all humility the condescensions of my sovereign, but my destiny is in the hands of a father, and you must not consider me as ungrateful if I deposit this flattering token in his custody, to be used according to the dictates of his sage discretion.

In compliance with these sentiments of filial duty, she gave the sign manual of Enriquez to her father. Then Siffredi saw at once what till that moment had eluded his penetration. He entered clearly into the prince's sentiments, and said: Your majesty shall have no reproaches to make me. I shall not act unworthily of the confidence . . . . My dear Leontio, interrupted Enriquez, you and unworthiness never can be allied. Make what use you please of my signature. I shall confirm your determination. But go, return to Palermo, prescribe the ceremonies for my coronation there, and tell my subjects that I shall follow you in person immediately, to receive their oaths of allegiance, and assure them of my protection in return. The minister obeyed the commands of his new master, and set out for Palermo with his daughter.

Some hours after their departure, the prince also left Belmonte, with his thoughts more intent on his passion than on the high rank to which he was called. Immediately on his arrival in the city, the air was rent with a thousand cries of joy. He made his entry into the palace amid the acclamations of the people, and everything was ready for the august formalities. The Princess Constance was waiting to receive him, in a magnificent mourning dress. She appeared deeply affected by Roger's death. The customs of society required from them a reciprocal compliment of condolence on the late event; and they each of them acquitted themselves with good breeding and propriety. But there was

the expense of your softest vows. Nay, why, resumed Enriquez, with rising passion, why too ready a self-tormentor, do you raise so afflicting a phantom of futurity? Should heaven take the king my uncle to itself, and place Sicily under my dominion, I swear to unite myself with you at Palermo, in presence of my whole court. To this I call to witness all which is held sacred and inviolable among men.

The protestations of Enriquez removed the fears of Siffredi's daughter. The rest of their discourse turned on the king's illness. Enriquez displayed the goodness of his natural disposition, for he pitied his uncle's lot, though he had no reason to be greatly affected by it; but the force of blood extorted from him sentiments of regret for a prince whose death held out an immediate prospect of the crown. Blanche did not yet know all the misfortunes which hung over her. The constable of Sicily, who had met her coming out of her father's apartment, one day when he was at the castle of Belmonte on some business of importance, was struck with admiration. The very next day, he made proposals to Siffredi, who entertained his offer favourably; but the illness of Roger taking place unexpectedly about that time, the marriage was put off for the present, and the subject had not been hinted at in the most distant manner to Blanche.

One morning, as Enriquez had just finished dressing, he was surprised to see Leontio enter his apartment, followed by Blanche. Sir, said this minister, the news I have to announce will in some degree afflict your excellent heart, but it is counteracted by consoling circumstances which ought to moderate your grief. The king your uncle has departed this life; and by his death left you the heir of his sceptre. Sicily is at your feet. The nobility of the kingdom wait your orders at Palermo. They have commissioned me to receive them in person, and I come, my liege, with my daughter to pay you the earliest and sincerest homage of your new subjects. The prince, who was well aware that Roger had been for two months sinking under a complaint gradual in its progress but fatal in its nature, was not astonished at this news. And yet, struck with his sudden exaltation, he felt a thousand confused motions rising up by turns in his heart. He mused for some time, then breaking silence, addressed these words to Leontio—Wise Siffredi, I have always considered

you as my father. I shall make it my glory to be governed by your counsels, and you shall reign in Sicily with a sway paramount to my own. With these words, advancing to the standish and taking a blank sheet of paper, he wrote his name at the bottom. What are you doing, sir? said Siffredi. Proving my gratitude and my esteem, answered Enriquez. Then the prince presented the paper to Blanche, and said—Accept, madam, this pledge of my faith, and of the empire with which I invest you over my thoughts and actions. Blanche received it with a blush, and made this answer to the prince—I acknowledge with all humility the condescensions of my sovereign, but my destiny is in the hands of a father, and you must not consider me as ungrateful if I deposit this flattering token in his custody, to be used according to the dictates of his sage discretion.

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somewhat more coldness on the part of Enriquez than on that of Constance, who could not enter into family quarrels, and resolved on hating the young prince. He placed himself on the throne, and the princess sate beside him, in a chair of state a little less elevated. The great officers of the realm fell into their places, each according to his rank. The ceremony began; and Leontio, as lord high chancellor of the kingdom, holding in his possession the will of the late king, opened it, and read the contents aloud. This instrument contained in substance that Roger, in default of issue, nominated the eldest son of Mainfroi his successor, on condition of his marrying the Princess Constance; and in the event of his refusing her hand, the crown of Sicily was to devolve, to his exclusion, on the head of the infant Don Pedro, his brother, on the like condition.

These words were a thunderstroke to Enriquez. His senses were all bewildered even to distraction; and his agonies became still more acute, when Leontio, having finished the reading of the will, addressed the assembly at large to the following effect: My lords, the last injunctions of the late king having been made known to our new monarch, that pious and excellent prince consents to honour his cousin the Princess Constance with his hand. At these words Enriquez interrupted the chancellor. Leontio, said he, remember the writing; Blanche . . . . Sire, interrupted Siffredi in his turn with precipitation, lest the prince should find an opportunity of making himself understood, here it is. The nobility of the kingdom, added he, exhibiting the blank paper to the assembly, will see by your majesty's august subscription, the esteem in which you hold the princess, and your implicit deference to the last will of the late king your uncle.

Having finished these words, he forthwith began reading the instrument in such terms as he had himself inserted. According to the contents, the new king gave a promise to his people, with formalities the most binding and authentic, that he would marry Constance, in conformity with the intention of Roger. The hall re-echoed with pealing shouts of satisfaction. Long live our high and mighty King Enriquez! exclaimed all those who were present. As the marked aversion of the prince for the princess had never been any secret, it was apprehended, not without reason, that he

might revolt against the condition of the will, and light up the flame of civil discord in the kingdom; but the public enunciation of this solemn act, quieting the fears of the nobility and the people on that head, excited these universal applauses, which went to the monarch's heart like the stab of an assassin. Constance, who had a nearer interest than any human being in the result, from the double motive of glory and personal affection, laid hold of this opportunity for expressing her gratitude. The prince had much ado to keep his feelings within bounds. He received the compliment of the princess with so constrained an air, and evinced so unusual a disorder in his behaviour, as scarcely to reply in a manner suited to the common forms of good breeding. At last, no longer master of his violent passions, he went up to Siffredi, whom the formalities of his office detained near the royal person, and said to him in a low tone of voice—What is the meaning of all this, Leontio? The signature which I deposited in your daughter's hands was not meant for such a use as this. You are guilty of....

My liege, interrupted Siffredi again with a tone of firmness, look to your own glory. If you refuse to comply with the injunctions of the king, your uncle, you lose the crown of Sicily. No sooner had he thrown in this salutary hint, than he got away from the king, to prevent all possibility of a reply. Enriquez was left in a most embarrassing situation. A thousand opposite emotions agitated him at once. He was exasperated against Siffredi: to give up Blanche was more than he could endure: so that, balancing between his private feelings and the calls of public honour, he was doubtful to which side he should incline. At length his doubts were resolved, under the idea of having found the means to secure Siffredi's daughter, without giving up his claim to the throne. He affected therefore an entire submission to the will of Roger, in the hope, while a dispensation from his marriage with his cousin was soliciting at Rome, of gaining the leading nobility by his largesses, and thus establishing his power so firmly, as not to be under the necessity of fulfilling the conditions of the obnoxious instrument.

After forming this design, he got to be more composed; and turning towards Constance, confirmed to her what the lord high chancellor had read in presence of the whole assembly. But, at the very moment when he had so far

betrayed himself as to pledge his faith, Blanche arrived in the hall of council. She came thither, by her father's command, to pay her duty to the princess; and her ears, on entering, were startled at the expressions of Enriquez. In addition to this shock, Leontio, determined not to leave her in doubt of her misfortune, accompanied her presentation to Constance with these words: Daughter, make your homage acceptable to your queen; call down upon her the blessings of a prosperous reign and a happy marriage. This terrible blow overwhelmed the unfortunate Blanche. Vain were all her attempts to suppress her anguish; her countenance changed successively from the deepest blush to a deadly paleness, and she trembled from head to foot. And yet the princess had no suspicion how the matter really stood; but attributed the confused style of her compliment to the awkwardness of a young person brought up in a state of rustication, and totally unacquainted with the manners of a court. But the young king was more in the secret. The sight of Blanche put him out of countenance: and the despair, too legible in her eyes, was enough to drive him out of his senses. Her feelings were not to be misunderstood; and they pointed at him as the most faithless of men. Could he have spoken to her, it might have tranquillized his agitation: but how to lay hold of the happy moment, when all Sicily, at least the illustrious part of it, was fixed in anxious expectation on his proceedings? Besides, the stern and inflexible Siffredi extinguished at once every ray of hope. This minister, who was at no loss to decipher the hearts of the two lovers, and was firmly resolved, if possible, to prevent the evil consequences impending over the state from the violence of this imprudent attachment, got his daughter out of the assembly with the dexterity of a practised courtier, and regained the road to Belmonte with her in his possession, determined, for more reasons than one, to marry her as soon as possible.

When they reached home, he gave her to understand all the horror of her destiny, by announcing his promise to the constable! Just heaven! exclaimed she, transported into a paroxysm of despair, which her father's presence could not restrain, what unparalleled sufferings have you the cruelty to lay up in store for the ill-fated Blanche? Her agony went to such a degree of violence, as to suspend every

power of her soul. Her limbs seemed as if stiffened under the icy grasp of death. Cold and pale, she fell senseless into her father's arms. Neither was he insensible to her melancholy condition. Yet, feeling as he did all the alarm and anxiety of a parent, the stern inflexibility of the statesman remained unshaken. Blanche, after a time, was recalled to life and feeling, rather by the keenness of her mental pangs than by the means which Siffredi used for her recovery. Languishingly did she raise her scarcely conscious eyes: when glancing on the author of her misery, as he was anxiously employed about her person; . . . . My lord, said she, with inarticulate and convulsive accents, I am ashamed to let you see my weakness: but death, which cannot be long in finishing my torments, will soon rid you of a wretched daughter, who has ventured to dispose of her heart without consulting you. No, my dear Blanche, answered Leontio, your death would be too dear a sacrifice: Virtue will resume her empire over your actions. The constable's proposals do you honour; it is one of the most considerable alliances in the state. . . . I esteem his person and am sensible of his merit, interrupted Blanche; but, my lord, the king had given me encouragement to indulge . . . . . Daughter, vociferated Siffredi, breaking in upon her discourse, I anticipate all you have to say on that subject. Your partiality for the prince is no secret to me, nor would it meet my disapprobation under other circumstances. You should even see me active and ardent to secure for you the hand of Enriquez, if the cause of glory and the welfare of the realm demanded it not indispensably for Constance. It is on the sole condition of marrying that princess, that the late king has nominated him his successor. Would you have him prefer you to the crown of Sicily? Believe me, my heart bleeds at the mortal blow which impends over you. Yet, since we cannot contend with the fates, make a magnanimous effort. Your fame is concerned, not to let the whole nation see that you have nursed up a delusive hope. Your sensibility towards the person of the king might even give birth to ignominious rumours. The only method of preserving yourself from their poison, is to marry the constable. In short, Blanche, there is no time left for irresolution. The king has decided between a throne and the possession of your charms. He has fixed his choice on Constance. The constable holds my

words in pledge; enable me to redeem it, I beseech you. Or if nothing but a paramount necessity can fix your wavering resolution, I must make an unwilling use of my parental authority; know then, I command you.

Ending with this threat, he left her to make her own reflections on what had passed. He was in hopes that after having weighed the reasons he had urged to support her virtue against the bias of her feelings, she would determine of herself to admit the constable's addresses. He was not mistaken in his conjecture: but at what an expense did the wretched Blanche rise to this height of virtuous resolution! Her condition was that in the whole world the most deserving of pity. The affliction of finding her fears realized respecting the infidelity of Enriquez, and of being compelled, besides losing the man of her choice, to sacrifice herself to another whom she could never love, occasioned her such storms of passion and alternate tossings of frantic desperation, as to bring with each successive moment a variety of vindictive torture. If my sad fate is fixed, exclaimed she, how can I triumph over it but by death? Merciless powers, who preside over our wayward fortunes, why feed and tantalize me with the most flattering hopes, only to plunge me headlong into a gulf of miseries? And thou too, perfidious lover! to rush into the arms of another, when all those vows of eternal fidelity were mine. So soon then is that plighted faith void and forgotten? To punish thee for so cruel a deception, may it please heaven, in its retribution, to make the conscious couch of conjugal endearment, polluted as it must be by perjury, less the scene of pleasure than the dungeon of remorse! May the fond caresses of Constance distil poison through thy faithless heart! Let us rival one another in the horrors of our nuptials! Yes, traitor, I mean to wed the constable, though shrinking from his ardent touch, to avenge me on myself! to be my own scourge and tormentor, for having selected so fatally the object of my frantic passion. Since deep-rooted obedience to the will of God forbids to entertain the thought of a premature death, whatever days may be allotted me to drag on shall be but a lengthened chain of heaviness and torment. If a sentiment of love still lurks about your heart, it will be revenge enough for me to cast myself into your presence, the devoted bride or victim of another: but if you have thrown off my remem-

brance with your own vows, Sicily at least shall glory in the distinction of reckoning among its natives a woman who knew how to punish herself for having disposed of her heart too lightly.

In such a state of mind did this wretched martyr to love and duty pass the night preceding her marriage with the constable. Siffredi, finding her the next morning ready to comply with his wishes, hastened to avail himself of this favourable disposition. He sent for the constable to Belmonte on that very day, and the marriage ceremony was performed privately in the chapel of the castle. What a crisis for Blanche! It was not enough to renounce a crown, to lose a lover endeared to her by every tie, and to yield herself up to the object of her hatred. In addition to all this, she must put a constraint on her sentiments before a husband, naturally jealous, and long occupied with the most ardent admiration of her charms. The bridegroom, delighted in the possession of her, was all day long in her presence. He did not leave her to the miserable consolation of pouring out her sorrows in secret. When night arrived, Leontio's daughter felt all her disgust and terror redoubled. But what seemed likely to become of her when her women, after having undressed her, left her alone with the constable? He enquired respectfully into the cause of her apparent faintness and discomposure. The question was sufficiently embarrassing to Blanche, who affected to be ill. Her husband was at first deceived by her pretences; but he did not long remain in such an error. Being, as he was, sincerely concerned at the condition in which he saw her, but still pressing her to go to bed, his urgent solicitations, falsely construed by her, offered to her wounded mind an image so cruel and indelicate, that she could no longer dissemble what was passing within, but gave a free course to her sighs and tears. What a discovery for a man who thought himself at the summit of his wishes! He no longer doubted but the distressed state of his wife was fraught with some sinister omen to his love. And yet, though this knowledge reduced him to a situation almost as deplorable as that of Blanche, he had sufficient command over himself to keep his suspicions within his own breast. He redoubled his assiduities, and went on pressing his bride to lay herself down, assuring her that the repose of which she stood in

need should be undisturbed by his interruption. He offered of his own accord even to call her women, if she was of opinion that their attendance could afford any relief to her indisposition. Blanche, reviving at that proposal, told him that sleep was the best remedy for the debility under which she laboured. He affected to think so too. They accordingly partook of the same bed, but with a conduct altogether different from what the laws of love, sanctioned by the rites of marriage, might authorize in a pair mutually delighted and delighting.

While Siffredi's daughter was giving way to her grief, the constable was hunting in his own mind for the causes which might render the nuptial office so contemptible a sinecure in his hands. He could not be long in conjecturing that he had a rival, but when he attempted to discover him he was lost in the labyrinth of his own ideas. All he knew with certainty, was the peculiar severity of his own fate. He had already passed two thirds of the night in this perplexity of thought, when an undistinguishable noise grew gradually on his sense of hearing. Great was his surprise when a footstep seemed audibly to pace about the room. He fancied himself mistaken; for he recollected shutting the door himself after Blanche's women had retired. He drew back the curtain to satisfy his senses on the occasion of this extraordinary noise. But the light in the chimney corner had gone out, and he soon heard a feeble and melancholy voice calling Blanche with anxious and importunate repetitions. Then did the suggestions of his jealousy transport him into rage. His insulted honour obliging him to rush from the bed to which he had so long aspired, and either to prevent a meditated injury, or take vengeance for its perpetration, he caught up his sword and flew forward in the direction whence the voice seemed to proceed. He felt a naked blade opposed to his own. As he advanced, his antagonist retired. The pursuit became more eager, the retreat more precipitate. His search was vigilant, and every corner of the room seemed to contain its object, but that which he momentarily occupied. The darkness, however, favoured the unknown invader, and he was nowhere to be found. The pursuer halted. He listened, but heard no sound. It seemed like enchantment! He made for the door, under the idea that this was the outlet to the secret assassin of his

honour; yet the bolt was shot as fast as before. Unable to comprehend this strange occurrence, he called those of his retinue who were most within reach of his voice. As he opened the door for this purpose, he placed himself so as to prevent all egress, and stood upon his guard, lest the devoted victim of his search should escape.

At his redoubled cries, some servants ran with lights. He laid hold of a taper, and renewed his search in the chamber with his sword still drawn. Yet he found no one there, nor any apparent sign of any person having been in the room. He was not aware of any private door, nor could he discover any practicable mode of escape: yet for all this, he could not shut his eyes against the nature and circumstances of his misfortune. His thoughts were all thrown into inextricable confusion. To ask any questions of Blanche was in vain: for she had too deep an interest in perplexing the truth, to furnish any clue whatever to its discovery. He therefore adopted the measure of unbosoming his griefs to Leontio; but previously sent away his attendants with the excuse that he thought he had heard some noise in the room, but was mistaken. His father-in-law having left his chamber in consequence of this strange disturbance, met him, and heard from his lips the particulars of this unaccountable adventure. The narrative was accompanied with every indication of extreme agony, produced by deep and tender feeling, as well as by a sense of insulted honour.

Siffredi was surprised at the occurrence. Though it did not appear to him at all probable, that was no reason for being easy about its reality. The king's passion might accomplish anything; and that idea alone justified the most cruel apprehensions. But it could do no good to foster either the natural jealousy of his son-in-law, or his particular suspicions arising out of circumstances. He therefore endeavoured to persuade him, with an air of confidence, that this imaginary voice, and airy sword opposed to his substantial one, were, and could possibly be, but the gratuitous creations of a fancy, under the influence of amorous distrust. It was morally impossible that any person should have made his way into his daughter's chamber. With regard to the melancholy, so visible in his wife's deportment, it might very naturally be attributed to precarious health and delicacy of constitution. The honour of a husband need not be so trem-

blingly alive to all the qualms of maiden fear and inexperience. Change of condition, in the case of a girl habituated to live almost without human society, and abruptly consigned to the embraces of a man in whom love and previous acquaintance had not inspired confidence, might innocently be the cause of these tears, of these sighs, and of this lively affliction so irksome to his feelings. But it was to be considered that tenderness, especially in the hearts of young ladies, fortified by the pride of blood against the excesses of love-sick abandonment, was only to be cherished into a flame by time and assiduity. He therefore exhorted him to tranquillize his disturbed mind; to be ardently officious in redoubling every instance of affection; to create a soft and seducing interest in the sensibility of Blanche. In short, he besought him earnestly to return to her apartment, and laboured to persuade him that his distrust and confusion would only set her on an unconjugal and litigious defence of her insulted virtue.

The constable returned no answer to the arguments of his father-in-law, whether because he began to think in good earnest that his senses were imposed on by the disorder of his mind, or because he thought it more to the purpose to dissemble, than to undertake ineffectually to convince the old man of an event so devoid of all likelihood. He returned to his wife's chamber, laid himself down by her side, and endeavoured to obtain from sleep some relief from his extreme uneasiness. Blanche, on her part, the unhappy Blanche, was not a whit more at her ease. Her ears had been but too open to the same alarming sounds, which had assailed her husband's peace; nor could she construe into illusion an adventure of which she well knew the secret and the motives. She was surprised that Enriquez should attempt to find his way into her apartment, after having pledged his faith so solemnly to the Princess Constance. Instead of feeding her soul with vanity, or deriving any flattering omens from a proceeding fraught with personal tenderness, but destructive to self-approbation, she considered it as a new insult, and her heart was only so much the more exasperated with resentment against the author.

While Siffredi's daughter, with all her prejudices excited against the young king, believed him the most guilty of men, that unhappy prince, more than ever ensnared by Blanche,

was anxious for an interview, to satisfy her mind on a subject which seemed to make so much against him. For that purpose he would have visited Belmonte sooner, but for a press of business too urgent to be neglected; nor could he withdraw himself from the court before that night. He was perfectly at home in all the turnings of a place where he had been brought up, and therefore was at no loss to slip into the castle of Siffredi. Nay, he was still in possession of the key to a secret door communicating with the gardens. By this inlet did he gain his former apartment, and thence found his way into Blanche's chamber. Only conceive what must have been the astonishment of that prince to find a man in possession, and to feel a sword opposed to his guard. He was just on the point of betraying all, and of punishing the rebel on the very spot, whose sacrilegious hand had dared to lift itself against the person of its lawful sovereign. But then the delicacy due to the daughter of Lorentio held his indignation in check. He retreated in the same direction as he had advanced, and regained the Palermo road, in more distress and perplexity than ever. Getting home some little time before daybreak, his apartment afforded him the most quiet retreat. But his thoughts were all on the road back to Belmonte. The resting-place of his affections, a sense of honour, in a word, love with all its pretensions and surmises, would never allow him to delay an explanation, involving all the circumstances of so strange and melancholy an adventure.

As soon as it was daylight he gave out that he was going on a hunting expedition. Under cover of sporting, his huntsmen and a chosen party of his courtiers penetrated into the forest of Belmonte under his direction. The chase was followed for some time, as a blind to his real design. When he saw the whole party eagerly driving on, and wholly engrossed by the sport, he galloped off in a different direction, and struck, without any attendants, into the road towards Leontio's castle. The various tracks of the forest were too well known to him to admit of his losing his way. His impatience, too, would not allow him to take any thought of his horse; so that the moments scarcely flitted faster, than his expedition in leaving behind him the distance which separated him from the object of his love. His very soul was on the rack for some plausible excuse to plead

for a private interview with Siffredi's daughter, when, crossing a narrow path just at the park gate, he observed two women sitting close by him, in earnest conversation under the shelter of a tree. It might well be supposed that these females belonged to the castle; and even that probability was sufficient to rouse an interest in ~~him~~. But his emotion was heightened into a feeling beyond his reason to control, for these ladies happened to look round on hearing the trot of a horse advancing in that direction; when at once he recognized his dear Blanche. The fact was, she had made her escape from the castle with Nisa, the person of all others among her women most in her confidence, that she might at least have the satisfaction of weeping over her misfortunes without intrusion or restraint.

He flew, and seemed rather to throw himself headlong than to fall at her feet. But when he beheld in the expression of her countenance every mark of the deepest affliction, his heart was softened. Lovely Blanche, said he, do not, let me entreat you, give way to the emotions of your grief. Appearances, I own, must represent me as guilty in your eyes: but when you shall be made acquainted with my project in your behalf, what you consider as a crime will be transformed in your thoughts into a proof of my innocence, and an evidence of my unparalleled affection. These words, calculated, according to the views of Enriquez, to allay the grief of Blanche, served only to redouble her affliction. Fain would she have answered, but her sobs stifled her utterance. The prince, thunderstruck at the death-like agitation of her frame, addressed her thus. What, madam, is there no possibility of tranquillizing your agitation? By what sad mischance have I lost your confidence, at the very moment when my crown and even my life are at stake, in consequence of my resolution to hold myself engaged to you? At this suggestion the daughter of Leontio, doing violence to her own feelings, but thinking it necessary to explain herself, said to him—My liege, your assurances are no longer admissible. My destiny and yours are henceforward as far asunder as the poles. Ah! Blanche, interrupted Enriquez with impatience, what cutting words are these, too painful for my sense of hearing? Who dares step in between our loves? Who would venture to stand forward against the headlong rage of a king who would

kindle all Sicily into a conflagration, rather than suffer you to be ravished from his long-cherished hopes? All your power, my liege, great as it is, replied the daughter of Siffredi in a tone of melancholy, becomes inefficient against the obstacles in the way of our union. I know not how to tell it you, but.... I am married to the constable.

Married to the constable! exclaimed the prince, starting back to some distance from her. He could proceed no further in his discourse, so completely was he thunderstruck at the intelligence. Overwhelmed by this unexpected blow, he felt his strength forsake him. His unconscious limbs laid themselves without his guidance against the trunk of a tree just behind him. His countenance was pallid, his whole frame in a tremor, his mind bewildered and his spirits depressed. With no sense or faculty at liberty but that of gazing, and there every power of his soul was suspended on Blanche, he made her feel most poignantly how he himself was agonized by the fatal event she had announced. The expression of countenance on her part was such as to show him that her emotions were not uncongenial with his own. Thus did these two distressed lovers for a time preserve a silence towards each other, which portended something of terror in its calmness. At length the prince, recovering a little from his disorder by an effort of courage, resumed the discourse, and said to Blanche with a sigh—Madam, what have you done? You have destroyed me, and involved yourself in the same ruin by your credulity.

Blanche was offended at the seeming reproaches of the king, when the strongest grounds of complaint were apparently on her side. What! my lord, answered she, do you add dissimulation to infidelity? Would you have me reject the evidence of my own eyes and ears, so as to believe you innocent in spite of their report? No, my lord, I will own to you such an effort of abstraction is not in my power. And yet, madam, replied the king, these witnesses by whose testimony you have been so fully convinced, are but impostors. They have been in a conspiracy to betray you. It is no less the fact that I am innocent and faithful, than it is true that you are married to the constable. What is it you say, my lord? replied she. Did I not overhear you confirming the pledge of your hand and heart to Constance? Have you not bound yourself to the nobility of the realm,

and undertaken to comply with the will of the late king? Has not the princess received the homage of your new subjects as their queen, and in quality of bride to Prince Enriquez? Were my eyes then fascinated? Tell me, tell me rather, traitor, that Blanche was weighed as dust in the balance of your heart, when compared with the attractions of a throne. Without lowering yourself so far as to assume what you no longer feel, and what perhaps you never felt, own at once that the crown of Sicily appeared a more tenable possession with Constance than with the daughter of Leontio. You are in the right, my lord. My title to an illustrious throne, and to the heart of a prince like you, stands on an equally precarious footing. It was vanity in the extreme to prefer a claim to either: but you ought not to have drawn me on into error. You well recollect what alarms were my portion at the very thought of losing you, of which I had almost a supernatural foreboding. Why did you lull my apprehensions to sleep? To what purpose was that delusive mockery? I might else have accused fate rather than yourself, and you would at least have retained an interest in my heart, though unaccompanied by a hand which no other suitor could ever have obtained. As we are now circumstanced, your justification is out of season. I am married to the constable. To relieve me from the continuance of an interview, which casts a shade over my purity hitherto unsullied, permit me, my lord, without failing in due respect, to withdraw from the presence of a prince to whose addresses I am no longer at liberty to listen.

With these words, she darted away from Enriquez in as hurried a step as the agitation of her spirits would allow. Stop, madam, exclaimed he, drive not to despair a prince, inclined to overturn a throne, which you reproach him for having preferred to yourself, rather than yield to the importunities of his new subjects. That sacrifice is under present circumstances superfluous, rejoined Blanche. The bond must be broken between the constable and me, before any effect can be produced by these generous transports. Since I am not my own mistress, little would it avail that Sicily should be embroiled, nor does it concern me to whom you give your hand. If I have betrayed my own weakness, and suffered my heart to be surprised, at least shall I muster fortitude enough to suppress every soft emotion,

and prove to the new king of Sicily, that the wife of the constable is no longer the mistress of Prince Enriquez. While this conversation was passing, they reached the park gate. With a sudden spring she and Nisa got within the walls. As they took care to fasten the wicket after them, the prince was left in a state of melancholy and stupefaction. He could not recover from the stunning sensation, occasioned by the intelligence of Blanche's marriage. Unjust may I well call you, exclaimed he. You have buried all remembrance of our solemn engagement! Spite of my protestations and your own, our fates are rent asunder? The long-cherished hope of possessing those charms was an empty phantom! Ah! cruel as you are, how dearly have I purchased the distinction, of compelling you to acknowledge the constancy of my love!

At that moment his rival's happiness, heightened by the colouring of jealousy, presented itself to his mind in all the horrors of that frantic passion. So arbitrary was its sway over him for some moments, that he was on the point of sacrificing the constable, and even Siffredi, to his blind vengeance. Reason, however, calmed by little and little the violence of his transports. And yet the obvious impossibility of effacing from the mind of Blanche her natural conviction of his infidelity, reduced him to despair. He flattered himself with weening her from her prejudices, could he but converse with her secure from interruption. To attain this end, it seemed the most feasible plan to get rid of the constable. He therefore determined to have him arrested, as a person suspected of treasonable designs, in the then unsettled state of public affairs. This commission was given to the captain of his guard, who went immediately to Belmonte, secured the person of his prisoner just as the evening was closing in, and carried him to the castle of Palermo.

This occurrence spread an alarm at Belmonte. Siffredi took his departure forthwith, to offer his own responsibility to the king for the innocence of his son-in-law, and to represent in their true colours the unpleasant consequences attending such arbitrary exertions of power. The prince, who had anticipated such a proceeding on the part of his minister, and was determined at least to secure himself a free interview with Blanche before the release of the con-

stable, had expressly forbidden any one to address him till the next day. But Leontio, setting this prohibition at defiance, contrived so well as to make his way into the king's chamber. My liege, said he, with an air of humility tempered with firmness, if it is allowable for a subject full of respect and loyalty to complain of his master, I have to arraign you before the tribunal of your own conscience. What crime has my son-in-law committed? Has your majesty sufficiently reflected what an everlasting reproach is entailed on my family? Are the consequences of an imprisonment calculated to disgust all the most important officers of the state with the service, a matter of indifference? I have undoubted information, answered the king, that the constable holds a criminal correspondence with the Infant Don Pedro. A criminal correspondence! interrupted Leontio, with surprise. Ah! my liege, give no ear to the surmise. Your majesty is played upon. Treason never gained a footing in the family of Siffredi. It is sufficient security for the constable that he is my son-in-law, to place him above all suspicion. The constable is innocent: but private motives have been the occasion of your arresting him.

Since you speak to me so openly, replied the king, I will adopt the same sincerity with you. You complain of the constable's imprisonment! Be it so. And have I no reason to complain of your cruelty? It is you, barbarous Siffredi, who have wrested my tranquillity from me, and reduced your sovereign, by your officious cares, to envy the lowliest of the human race. For do not so far deceive yourself as to believe that I shall ever enter into your views. My marriage with Constance is quite out of the question.... What, my liege, interrupted Leontio, with an expression of horror, is there any doubt about your marrying the princess, after having flattered her with that hope in the face of your whole people? If their wishes are disappointed, replied the king, take the credit to yourself. Wherefore did you reduce me to the necessity of giving them a promise my heart would not allow me to make good? Where was the occasion to fill up with the name of Constance an instrument designed for the elevation of your own daughter? You could not be a stranger to my design; need you have completed your tyranny by devoting Blanche to the arms of a man to whom she could not give her heart? And

what authority have you over mine to dispose of it in favour of a princess whom I detest? Have you forgotten that she is the daughter of that cruel Matilda, who, trampling the rights of consanguinity and human nature under foot, caused my father to breathe his last under all the rigours of a hard captivity? And should I marry her! No, Siffredi, throw away that hope. Before the lurid torch of such an hymeneal shall be kindled in your presence, you shall behold all Sicily in flames, and the expiring embers quenched in blood.

Do not my ears deceive me? exclaimed Leontio. Ah! sovereign, what a scene do you present me with! Who can hear such menaces without shuddering? But I am too forward to take the alarm, continued he in an altered voice. You are in too close a union with your subjects to be the instrument of a catastrophe so melancholy. You will not suffer passion to triumph over your reason. Virtues like yours shall never lose their lustre by the tarnish of human and ordinary weakness. If I have given my daughter into the arms of the constable, it was with the design, my liege, of securing to your majesty a powerful subject, able by his own valour, and the army under his command, to maintain your party against that of the Prince Don Pedro. It appeared to me that by connecting him with my family in so close a bond . . . . Yes, yes! This bond, exclaimed Prince Enriquez, this fatal bond has been my ruin. Unfeeling friend, to aim a wound at my vital part! What commission had you to take care of my interests at the expense of my affections? Why did you not leave me to support my pretensions by my own arm? Was there any question about my courage that I should be thought incompetent to reduce my rebellious subjects to their obedience? Means might have been found to punish the constable had he dared to have fallen off from his allegiance! I am well aware of the difference between a lawful king and an arbitrary tyrant. The happiness of our people is our first duty. But are we, on the other hand, to be the slaves of our subjects? From the moment when we are selected by heaven for our high office, do we lose the common privilege of nature, the birthright of the human race, to dispose of our affections in whatsoever current they may flow? Well then! if we are less our own masters than the

lowest of the human race, take back, Siffredi, that sovereign authority you affect to have secured to me by the wreck of my personal happiness.

You cannot but be acquainted, my liege, replied the minister, that it was on your marriage with the princess, the late king, your uncle, made the succession of the crown to depend. And by what right, rejoined Enriquez, did even he assume to himself so arbitrary a disposition? Was it on such unworthy terms that he succeeded his brother, King Charles? How came you yourself to be so besotted as to allow of a stipulation so unjust? For a high chancellor, you are not too well versed in our laws and constitutions. To cut the matter short, though I have promised my hand to Constance, the engagement was not voluntary. I do not therefore think myself bound to keep my word; and if Don Pedro founds on my refusal any hope of succeeding to the throne without involving the nation in a bloody and destructive contest, his error will be too soon visible. The sword shall decide between us to whom the prize of empire may more worthily fall. Leontio could not venture to press him further, and confined himself to supplicating on his knees for the liberty of his son-in-law. That boon he obtained. Go, said the king to him, return to Belmonte, the constable shall follow you thither without delay. The minister departed, and made the best of his way to Belmonte, under the persuasion that his son-in-law would overtake him on the road. In this he was mistaken. Enriquez was determined to visit Blanche that night, and with such views he deferred the enlargement of her husband till the next morning.

During this time the feelings of the constable were of the most agonizing nature. His imprisonment had opened his eyes to the real cause of his misfortune. He gave himself up to jealousy without restraint or remorse, and belying the good faith which had hitherto rendered his character so valuable, his thoughts were all bent on his revenge. As he conjectured rightly that the king would not fail to reconnoitre Blanche's apartment during the night, it was his object to surprise them together. He therefore besought the governor of the castle at Palermo to allow of his absence from the prison, on the assurance of his return before daybreak. The governor, who was devoted to his

interest, gave his permission so much the more easily, as being already advertised that Siffredi had procured his liberty. Indeed, he even went so far as to supply him with a horse for his journey to Belmonte. The constable on his arrival there fastened his horse to a tree. He then got into the park by a little gate of which he had the key, and was lucky enough to slip into the castle without being recognized by anyone. On reaching his wife's apartment he concealed himself in the ante-chamber, behind a screen placed as if expressly for his use. His intention was to observe narrowly what was going forward, and to present himself on a sudden in Blanche's chamber at the sound of any footstep he should hear. The first object he beheld was Nisa, taking leave of her mistress for the night, and withdrawing to a closet where she slept.

Siffredi's daughter, who had been at no loss to fathom the meaning of her husband's imprisonment, was fully convinced that he would not return to Belmonte that night, although she had heard from her father of the king's assurance that the constable should set out immediately after him. As little could she doubt but Enriquez would avail himself of the interval to see and converse with her at his pleasure. With this expectation she awaited the prince's arrival, to reproach him for a line of conduct so pregnant with fatal consequences to herself. As she had anticipated, a very short time after Nisa had retired the sliding panel opened, and the king threw himself at the feet of his beloved. Madam, said he, condemn me not without a hearing. It is true I have occasioned the constable's imprisonment, but then consider that it was the only method left me for my justification. Attribute therefore that desperate stratagem to yourself alone. Why did you refuse to listen to my explanation this morning? Alas! To-morrow your husband will be liberated, and I shall no longer have an opportunity of addressing you. Hearken to me then for the last time. If the loss of you has embittered the remainder of my days, vouchsafe me at least the melancholy satisfaction of convincing you that I have not called down this misfortune on myself by my own inconstancy. I did indeed confirm the pledge of my hand to Constance, but then it was unavoidable in the situation to which your father's policy had reduced us. It was necessary

to put this imposition on the princess for your interest and for my own; to secure to you your crown, and with it the hand and heart of your devoted lover. I had flattered myself with the prospect of success. Measures were already taken to supersede that engagement, but you have destroyed the bright illusions of my fancy; and, by disposing of yourself too precipitately, have ante-dated an eternity of torment for two hearts, whom a mutual and perfect love might have conducted to perpetual bliss.

He concluded this explanation with such evident marks of unfeigned agony, that Blanche was affected by his words. She had no longer any hesitation about his innocence. At first her joy was unbounded at the conviction; but then again a sense of their cruel circumstances gained the ascendant over her mind. Ah! my honoured lord, said she to the prince, after such a determination of our destinies, you only inflict a new pang by informing me that you were not to blame. What have I done, wretched as I am? My keen resentment has betrayed me into error. I fancied myself cast off; and in the moment of my anger, accepted the hand of the constable, whose addresses my father promoted. But the crime is all my own, though the woes are mutual. Alas! In the very conjuncture when I accused you of deceiving me, it was by my own act, too credulously impassioned as I was, that the ties were broken, which I had sworn for ever to make indissoluble. Take your revenge, my lord, in your turn. Indulge your hatred against the ungrateful Blanche. . . . . Forget. . . . What! and is it in my power then, Madam? interrupted Enriquez with a dejected air: how is it possible to tear a passion from my heart, which even your injustice had not the power of extinguishing? Yet it becomes necessary for you to make that effort, my liege, replied the daughter of Siffredi, with a deep sigh. . . . And shall you be equal to that effort yourself? replied the king. I am not confident with myself for my success, answered she: but I shall spare no pains in the attainment of my object. Ah! unfeeling fair one, said the prince, you will easily banish Enriquez from your remembrance, since you can contemplate such a purpose so steadfastly. Whither then does your imagination lead? said Blanche, in a more decisive tone. Do you flatter yourself that I can permit the continuance of your tender

assiduities? No, my lord, banish that hope for ever from your thoughts. If I was not born for royalty, neither has heaven formed me to be degraded by illicit addresses. My husband, like yourself, my liege, is allied to the noble house of Anjou. Though the call of duty were less peremptory, in opposing an insurmountable obstacle to your insidious proposals, a sense of pride would hinder me from admitting them. I conjure you to withdraw: we must meet no more. What a barbarous sentence! exclaimed the king. Ah! Blanche, is it possible that you should treat me with so much severity? Is it not enough then to weigh me down, that the constable should be in possession of your charms? And yet you would cut me off from the bare sight of you, the only comfort which remains to me! For that very reason avoid my presence, answered Siffredi's daughter, not without some tears of tenderness. The contemplation of what we have dearly loved is no longer a blessing, when we have lost all hope of the possession. Adieu, my lord! Shun my very image. You owe that exertion to your own honour and to my good name. I claim it also for my own peace of mind: for to deal sincerely, though my virtue should be steady enough to combat with the suggestions of my heart, the very remembrance of your affection stirs up so cruel a conflict, that it is almost too much for my frail nature to support the shock.

Her utterance of these words was attended with so energetic an action, as to overset the light placed on a table behind her, and its fall left the room in darkness. Blanche picked it up. She then opened the door of the antechamber, and went to Nisa's closet, who was not yet gone to bed, for the purpose of lighting it again. She was now returning, after having accomplished her errand. The king, who was waiting for her impatiently, no sooner saw her approach than he resumed his ardent plea with her, to allow of his attentions. At the prince's voice, the constable rushed impetuously, sword in hand, into the room, almost at the same moment with his bride. Advancing up to Enriquez with all the indignation which his fury kindled within him: This is too much, tyrant, cried he; flatter not yourself that I am cowardly enough to bear with this affront, which you have offered to my honour. Ay! traitor, answered the king, standing on his guard, lay aside the vain

imagination of being able to compass your purpose with impunity. With these mutual taunts, they entered on a conflict, too violent to be long undecided. The constable, fearing lest Siffredi and his attendants should be aroused too soon by the piercing shrieks of Blanche, and should interpose between him and his revenge, took no care of himself. His frenzy robbed him of all skill. He fenced so heedlessly, as to run headlong on his adversary's sword. The weapon entered his body up to the hilt. He fell; and the king instantaneously checked his hand.

The daughter of Leontio, touched at her husband's condition, and rising superior to her natural repugnance, threw herself on the ground, and was anxious to afford him every assistance. But that ill-fated bridegroom was too deeply prejudiced against her, to allow himself to be softened by the evidences she gave of her sorrow and her pity. Death, whose hand he felt upon him, could not stifle the transports of his jealousy. In these his last moments, no image presented itself to his mind but his rival's success. So insufferable was that idea to him, that, collecting together the little strength he had left, he raised his sword, which he still grasped convulsively, and plunged it deep in Blanche's bosom. Die, said he, as he inflicted the fatal wound; die, faithless bride, since the ties of wedlock were not strong enough to preserve to me the vow which you had sworn upon the altar. And as for you, Enriquez, pursued he, triumph not too loudly on your destinies. You are prevented from taking advantage of my froward fortune; and I die content. Scarcely did these words quiver on his lips, when he breathed his last. His countenance, overcast as it was with the shades of death, had still something in it of fierceness and of terror. That of Blanche presented a quite different aspect. The wound she had received was mortal. She fell on the scarcely breathing body of her husband: and the blood of the innocent victim flowed in the same stream with that of her murderer, who had executed his cruel purpose so suddenly, that the king could not prevent it from taking effect.

This ill-fated prince uttered a cry at the sight of Blanche as she fell. Pierced deeper than herself by the stab which deprived her of life, he did his utmost to afford the same relief to her as she had offered, though at so fatal an expense,

to one who might have rewarded her better. But she addressed him in these words, while the last breath quivered on her lips: My lord, your assiduities are fruitless, I am the victim. Merciless fate demands me, and I resign myself to death. May the anger of heaven be appeased by the sacrifice, and the prosperity of your reign be confirmed. As she was with difficulty uttering these last words, Leontio, drawn thither by the reverberation of her shrieks, came into the room; and, thunderstruck at the dreadful scene before him, remained fixed to the spot where he stood. Blanche, without noticing his presence, went on addressing herself to the king. Farewell, prince, said she; cherish my memory with the tenderness it deserves. My affection and my misfortunes entitle me at least to that. Harbour no aversion to my father; he is innocent. Be a comfort to his remaining days; assuage his grief; acknowledge his fidelity. Above all, convince him of my spotless virtue. With this I charge you, before every other consideration. Farewell, my dear Enriquez . . . . I am dying . . . . Receive my last sigh.

Here her words were intercepted by the approach of death. For some time the king maintained a sullen silence. At length he said to Siffredi, whose senses seemed to be locked up in a mortal trance: Behold, Leontio; feed on the contemplation of your own work. In this tragical event, you may ruminate on the issue of your officious cares, and your overweening zeal for my service. The old man returned no answer, so deeply was he penetrated by his affliction. But wherefore dwell on the description of circumstances, when the powers of language must sink under the weight of such a catastrophe? Suffice it to say, that they mutually poured forth their sorrows in the most affecting terms, as soon as their grief allowed them to give vent to its effusions in speech.

Through the whole course of his life, the king cherished a tender recollection of his mistress. He could not bring himself to marry Constance. The infant Don Pedro combined with that princess, and by their joint efforts, an obstinate attempt was made to carry the will of Roger into execution; but they were compelled in the end to give way to Prince Enriquez, who gained the ascendancy over all his enemies. As for Siffredi, the melancholy he contracted

from having been the cause of destruction to his dearest friends, gave him a disgust to the world, and made a longer abode in his native country insupportable. He turned his back on Sicily for ever; and, coming over into Spain with Portia, his surviving daughter, purchased this mansion. He lived here nearly fifteen years after the death of Blanche, and had the consolation, before his own death, of establishing Portia in the world. She married Don Jerome de Silva, and I am the only issue of that marriage. Such, pursued the widow of Don Pedro de Pinares, is the story of my family; a faithful recital of the melancholy events represented in that picture, which was painted by order of my grandfather Leontio, as a record to his posterity of the fatal adventure I have related.

CHAPTER V

THE BEHAVIOUR OF AURORA DE GUZMAN ON HER ARRIVAL AT SALAMANCA

Ortiz, her companions, and myself, after having heard this tale, withdrew together from the hall, where we left Aurora with Elvira. There they lengthened out the remainder of the day in a mutual intercourse of confidence. They were not likely to be weary of each other: and on the following morning, when we took our leave, there was as much to do to part them, as if they had been two friends brought up in the closest habits of confidence and affection.

In due time we reached Salamanca without any impediment. There we immediately engaged a ready-furnished house, and Dame Ortiz, as it had been before agreed, assumed the name of Donna Kimena de Guzman. She had played the part of a duenna too long not to be able to shift her character according to circumstances. One morning she went out with Aurora, a waiting-maid and a man-servant, and betook herself to a lodging house, where we had been informed that Pacheco most commonly took up his abode. She asked if there was any lodging to be let there. The answer was in the affirmative; and they showed her into a room in very neat condition, which she hired. She paid down earnest to the landlady, telling her that it was

for one of her nephews who was coming from Toledo to finish his studies at Salamanca, and might be expected on that very day.

The duenna and my mistress, after having made sure of this apartment, went back the way they came, and the lovely Aurora, without loss of time, metamorphosed herself into a spruce young spark. She concealed her black ringlets under a braid of light-coloured hair, the better to disguise herself; . . . . manufactured her eyebrows to correspond, and dressed herself up in such a costume, as to look for all the world as if her sex were of a piece with her appearance. Her deportment was free and easy; so that, with the exception of her face, which was somewhat more delicate than became the manly character, there was nothing to lead to a discovery of her masquerading. The waiting woman who was to officiate as page, got into her paraphernalia at the same time, and we had no apprehension respecting her competency to perform her part. There was no danger of her beauty telling any tales; and besides, she could put on as brazen-faced a swagger as the most impudent dog in town. After dinner, our two actresses, finding themselves in cue to make their first appearance on the stage, where the scene was laid in the ready-furnished lodging, took me along with them. We all three placed ourselves in the coach, and carried with us all the baggage we were likely to have occasion for.

The landlady, Bernarda Ramirez by name, welcomed us with a glut of civility, and led the way to our room, where we began to make arrangements with her. We concluded a bargain for our board by the month, which she undertook should be suitable to our condition. Then we asked if she had her complement of boarders. I have none at all at present, answered she. Not that there would be any want of enough, if I was of the mind to take in all sorts of people: but young men of fashion are the thing for me. I expect one of that description this morning: he is coming hither from Madrid to complete his education. Don Lewis Pacheco! But you must have heard of him before now. No, said Aurora, I have no acquaintance whatever with the gentleman; and since we are to be inmates together, you will do me a kindness by letting me a little into his character. Please your honour, replied the landlady,

leering at this outside of a man, his figure is as taking as your own; just the same sort of make, and about the same size. Oh! how well you will do together! By St James, though I say it who should not say it, I shall have about me two of the prettiest young fellows in all Spain. Well, but about Don Lewis! for my mistress was in a fidget to ask the grand question. Of course; . . . . he is well with the ladies in your parts! Enough of . . . . of love affairs . . . . on his hands! Oh! do not you be afraid of that, rejoined the old lady; it is a forward sprig of gallantry, take my word for it. He has but to show himself before the works, and the citadel sends to capitulate. Among the number of his conquests, he has got into the good graces of a lady, with as much youth and beauty as he will know what to do with. Her name is Isabella. Her father is an old doctor of laws. She is over head and ears in love with him; absolutely out of her wits! Well, but do tell me now, my dear little woman, interrupted Aurora, as if she was ready to burst, is he out of his wits too? He used to be very fond of her, answered Bernarda Ramirez, before he went last to Madrid: but whether he holds in the same mind still, I will not venture to say; because on these points he is not altogether to be trusted. He is apt to flirt, first with one woman, and then with another, just as all you young deceivers take pleasure in doing. You are all alike!

The bonny widow had scarcely got to the end of her harangue, before we heard a noise in the court. On looking out at the window, behold! there appeared two young men dismounting from their steeds. Who should it be, but the identical Don Lewis Pacheco, just arrived from Madrid, with a servant behind him. The old lady brushed off to go and usher him in; while my mistress was putting herself in order, not without some palpitation of heart, to enact Don Felix to the best of her conceptions. Without waiting for any formalities, in marched Don Lewis to our apartment in his travelling dress. I have just been informed, said he, paying his respects to Aurora, that a young nobleman of Toledo takes up his abode in this house. May I take the liberty of expressing my joy in the circumstance, and hoping that we may be better acquainted? During my mistress's reply to this compliment, it seemed to me as if Pacheco did not know what to make of so smock-faced a

young spark. Indeed he could not refrain from declaring a more than ordinary admiration of an air and figure so attractive. After abundance of discourse, with every demonstration of reciprocal good breeding, Don Lewis withdrew to the apartment provided for him.

While he was getting his boots off, and changing his dress and linen, a sort of a page, on the look-out after him to deliver a letter, met Aurora by chance on the staircase. Her he mistook for Don Lewis. Thinking he had found the right owner for this tender message, of which he was the Mercury—Softly! my honoured lord and master, said he, though I have not the honour of knowing Signor Pacheco, there can be no occasion for asking whether you are the man. It is impossible to be mistaken in the guess. No, my friend, answered my mistress with a most happy presence of mind, assuredly you are not mistaken. You acquit yourself of your embassies to a marvel. I am Don Lewis Pacheco. You may retire! I will find an opportunity of sending an answer. The page vanished, and Aurora shutting herself up with her waiting-maid and me, opened the letter, and read to us as follows:—"I have just heard of your being at Salamanca. With what joy did I receive the news! I thought I should have gone out of my senses. But do you love Isabella as well as ever? Lose no time in assuring her that you are still the same. In good truth, she will almost expire with pleasure when once she is assured of your constancy."

This is a mighty passionate epistle, said Aurora. The heart that indited it has been caught in a trap. This lady is a rival of no mean capacity. No pains must be spared to wean Don Lewis from her, and even to prevent any future interview. The undertaking is difficult, I acknowledge, and yet there seems no reason to despair of the result. My mistress, taking her own hint, fell into a fit of musing; from which having recovered as soon as she fell into it, she added —I will lay a wager they are at daggers drawn in less than twenty-four hours. It so happened that Pacheco, after a short repose in his apartment, came to look after us in ours, and entered once more into conversation with Aurora before supper. My dapper little knight, said he with a rakish air, I fancy the poor devils of husbands and lovers will have no reason to hug themselves on your arrival at

Salamanca. You will make their hearts ache for them. As for myself, I tremble for all my snug arrangements. I tell you what! answered my mistress with congenial spirit, your fears are not without their foundation. Don Felix de Mendoza is rather formidable, so take care what you are about. This is not my first visit in this country, the ladies hereabouts, to my knowledge, are made of penetrable materials. About a month ago my way happened to lie through this city. I halted for eight days, and you are to know .... but you must not mention it .... that I set fire to the daughter of an old doctor of laws.

It was evident enough that Don Lewis was disturbed by this declaration. Might one without impropriety, replied he, just ask the lady's name? What do you mean by impropriety? exclaimed the pretended Don Felix. Why make any secret about such a matter as that? Do you think me more of a Joseph than other young noblemen of my standing? Have a better opinion of my spirit. Besides, the object, between ourselves is unworthy of any great reserve, she is but a little mushroom of the lower ranks. A man of fashion never quarrels with his conscience about such obscure gallantries, and even thinks it an honour conferred on a tradesman's wife or daughter when he leaves her without any. I shall therefore acquaint you in plain terms, that the name of the doctor's daughter is Isabella. And the doctor himself, interrupted Pacheco impatiently . . . .he possibly may be Signor Murcia de la Llana? Precisely so, replied my mistress. Here is a letter sent me just now. Read it, and then you will see how deeply your humble servant has dipped into her good graces. Don Lewis just cast his eye upon the note, and recognizing the handwriting, was struck dumb with astonishment and vexation. What is the matter? cried Aurora, with an air of surprise, keeping up the spirit of her assumed character. You change colour! God forgive me, but you are a party concerned in this young lady. Ah! Plague take my officious tongue for having opened my affairs to you with so much frankness.

I am very much obliged to you for it for my own part, said Don Lewis in a transport made up of spite and rage. Traitress! Jilt! My dear Don Felix, how shall I ever requite you! You have restored me to my senses when they were just on the wing for an eternal flight. I was tickling myself

into a fool's paradise of credulous love. But love is too cold a term to express my extravagancies. I fancied myself adored by Isabella. The creature had wormed herself into my heart by feigning to give me her own. But now I know her clearly for a coquette, and as such despise her as she deserves. Your feelings on the occasion do you infinite credit, said Aurora, testifying a friendly sympathy in his resentment. A plodding pettifogger's worthless brood might have gorged to surfeit on the love of a young nobleman so captivating as yourself. Her fickleness is inexcusable. So far from taking her sacrifice of you in good part, it is my determination to punish her by the keenest contempt. As for me, rejoined Pacheco, I shall never set eyes on her again; and if that is not revenge, the devil is in it. You are in the right, exclaimed our masquerading Mendoza. At the same time, that she may fully understand how ineffably we both disdain her, I vote for sitting down, each of us, and writing her a sarcastic farewell. They shall be enclosed in one cover, and serve as an answer to her own letter. But do not let us proceed to this extremity till you have examined your heart; it may be you will repent hereafter of having broken off with Isabella. No, no, interrupted Don Lewis, I am not such a fool as that comes to; let it be a bargain, and we will mortify the ungrateful wretch as you propose.

I immediately sent for pen, ink, and paper, when they sat themselves down at opposite corners of the table, and drew up a most tender bill of indictment against Doctor Murcia de la Llana's daughter. Pacheco, in particular, was at a loss for language forcible enough to convey his sentiments in all their acrimony; away went exordium after exordium, to the tearing and maiming of five or six fair sheets, before the words looked crooked enough to please his jealous eyes. At length, however, he produced an epistle which came up with his most tragical conceptions. It ran thus—"Self-knowledge is a leading branch of wisdom, my little philosopher. As a candidate for a professor's chair, lay aside the vanity of fancying yourself amiable. It requires merit of a far different compass to fix my affections. You have not enough of the woman about you to afford me even a temporary amusement. Yet do not despair, you have a sphere of your own, the beggarly

servitors in our university have a keen appetite, but no very distinguishing palate." So much for this elegant epistle! When Aurora had finished hers, which rang the changes on similar topics, she sealed them, wrapped them up together, and giving me the packet—There, Gil Blas, said she, take care that comes to Isabella's hands this very evening. You comprehend me! added she, with a glance from the corner of her eye, which admitted of no doubtful construction. Yes, my lord, answered I, your commands shall be executed to a tittle.

I lost no time in taking my departure; no sooner in the street than I said to myself—So ho! Master Gil Blas, your part then is that of the intriguing footman in this comedy. Well! so be it, my friend! show that you have wit and sense enough to top it over the favourite actor of the day. Signor Don Felix thinks a wink as good as a nod. A high compliment to the quickness of your apprehension! Is he then in an error? No. His hint is as clear as daylight. Don Lewis's letter is to drop its companion by the way. A lucid exposition of a dark hieroglyphic, enough to shame the dullness of the commentators. The sacredness of a seal could never stand against this bright discovery. Out came the single letter of Pacheco, and away went I to hunt after Doctor Murcia's abode. At the very threshold, whom should I meet but the little page who had been at our lodging. Comrade, said I, do not you happen to live with the great lawyer's daughter? His answer was in the affirmative. I see by your countenance, resumed I, that you know the ways of the world. May I beg the favour of you to slip this little memorandum into your mistress's hand?

The little page asked me on whose behalf I was a messenger. The name of Don Lewis Pacheco had no sooner escaped my lips, than he told me—Since that is the case, follow me. I have orders to show you up. Isabella wants to confer with you. I was introduced at once into a private apartment, where it was not long before the lady herself made her appearance. The beauty of her face was inexpressibly striking: I do not recollect to have seen more lovely features. Her manner was somewhat mincing and infantine, yet for all that it had been thirty good years at least since she had mewled and puked in her nurse's arms. My friend, said she with an encouraging smile, are you or

Don Lewis Pacheco's establishment? I told her I had been in office for these three weeks. With this I fired off my paper popgun against her peace. She read it over two or three times, but if she had rubbed her eyes till doomsday she would have seen no clearer. In point of fact, nothing could be more unexpected than so cavalier an answer. Up went her eyes towards the heavens, appealing to their rival luminaries. The ivory[1] fences of her pretty mouth committed alternate trespass on her soft and suffering lips; and her whole physiognomy bore witness to the pangs of her distressed and disappointed heart. Then coming to herself a little and recovering her speech—My friend, said she, has Don Lewis taken leave of his senses? Tell me, if you can, his motive for so heroic an epistle. If he is tired of me, well and good, but he might have taken his leave like a gentleman.

Madam, said I, my master most assuredly has not acted as I should have acted in his place. But he has in some sort been compelled to do as he has done. If you would give me your word to keep the secret, I could unravel the whole mystery. You have it at once, interrupted she with eagerness; depend on it you shall be brought into no scrape by me, therefore explain yourself without reserve. Well, then! replied I, the fact is, without paraphrase, circumlocution, loss of time, or perplexity of understanding, as I shall distinctly state in two short words—Not half a minute after the receipt of your letter, there came into our house a lady, under a veil as impenetrable as her purpose was dark. She inquired for Signor Pacheco, and talked with him in private for some time. At the close of the conversation, I overheard her saying—You swear to me never to see her more; but we must not stop there, to set my heart completely at rest you must instantly write her a farewell letter of my dictating. You know my terms. Don Lewis did as she desired, then giving the result into my custody—Acquaint yourself, said he, where Doctor Murcia de la

[1] Should this phrase appear far-fetched in the person of Gil Blas, it may be recollected, that though not much of a student himself, he had waited on students; and might have sucked in, while standing behind their chairs, along with "fates and destinies, and such old sayings, the sisters three, and such branches of learning," that exquisitely characteristic Greek metaphor—"a hedge of teeth."—TRANSLATOR.

Llana lives, and contrive to administer this love potion to his daughter Isabella.

You see plainly, madam, pursued I, that this uncivil epistle is a rival's handiwork, and that consequently my master is not so much to blame as he appears. Oh, heaven! exclaimed she, he is more so than I was aware of. His words might have been the error of his hand, but his infidelity is the offence of his heart. Faithless man! Now he is held by other ties! . . . . But, added she, assuming an air of disdain, let him devote himself unconstrained to his new passion; I shall never cross him. Tell him, however, that he need not have insulted me. I should have left the course open to my rival, without his warning me from the field; for so fickle a lover has not soul enough about him to pay for the degradation of soliciting his return. With this sentiment she gave me my dismissal, and retired in a whirlwind of passion against Don Lewis.

My exit was conducted entirely to my own satisfaction, for I conceived that with due cultivation of my talent I might in time become a consummate hypocrite and most successful cheat. I returned home on the strength of it, where I found my worthy masters, Mendoza and Pacheco, supping together, and rattling away as if they had been playfellows from their cradles. Aurora saw at once, by my self-sufficient air, that her commission had not been neglected in my hands. Here you are again then, Gil Blas, said she, give us an account of your embassy. Wit and invention was all I had to trust to, so I told them I had delivered the packet into Isabella's own hands; who, after having glanced over the contents of the two letters, so far from seeming disconcerted, burst into a fit of laughter, as if she had been mad, and said—Upon my word, our young men of fashion write in a pretty style. It must be owned they are much more entertaining than scribes of plebeian rank. It was a very good way of getting out of the scrape, exclaimed my mistress, she must be an arrant coquette. For my part, said Don Lewis, I cannot trace a feature of Isabella in this conduct. Her character must have been completely metamorphosed in my absence. She struck me too in a very different light, replied Aurora. It must be allowed some women can assume all modes and fashions at will. I was once in love with one of that description, and

a fine dance she led me. Gil Blas can tell you the whole story! She had an air of propriety about her which might have imposed upon a whole synod of old maids. It is true, said I, putting in my oar; it was a face to play the devil with a sworn bachelor, I could scarcely have been proof against it myself.

The personated Mendoza and Pacheco shouted with laughter at my manner of expressing myself; the one for the false witness I bore against a culprit of my own creation; the other laughed simply at the phrase in which my anathema was couched. We went on talking about the versatility of women, and the verdict, after hearing the evidence, all on one side, was given against Isabella. A convicted coquette! and sentence passed on her accordingly. Don Lewis made a fresh vow never to see her more, and Don Felix, after his example, swore to hold her in eternal abhorrence. By dint of these mutual protestations a sort of friendship was established on the spur of the occasion, and they promised on both sides to keep no secrets from each other. The time after supper passed in ingratiating intercourse, and the time seemed short till they retired to their separate apartments. I followed Aurora to hers, where I gave her a faithful account of my conversation with the Doctor's daughter, not forgetting the most trivial circumstance. She had much ado to help kissing me for joy. My dear Gil Blas, said she, I am delighted with your spirit. When one has the misfortune to be engaged in a passion not to be gratified but by stratagems, what an advantage is it to secure on the right side a lad of so enterprising a genius as yourself. Courage, my friend, we have thrown a rival into the background, whose presence in the scene might have marred our comedy. So far, all is well. But as lovers are subject to strange vagaries, it seems to me that we must make short work of it, and bring Aurora de Guzman on the stage to-morrow. The idea met with my entire approbation; so leaving Signor Don Felix with his page, I withdrew to bed in an adjoining closet.

CHAPTER VI

AURORA'S DEVICES TO SECURE DON LEWIS PACHECO'S AFFECTIONS

THE two new friends met as soon as they came down in the morning. The ceremonies of the day began with reciprocal embraces, about which it was impossible for Aurora to be squeamish, for then Don Felix must have dropped the mask altogether. They went out and walked about town arm in arm, attended by Chilindron, Don Lewis's footman, and myself. We loitered about the gates of the university, looking at some posting bills and advertisements of new publications. There were a good many people amusing themselves, like us, with reading over the contents of these placards. Among the rest my eye was caught by a little fellow, who was giving his opinion very learnedly on the works exposed to sale. I observed him to be heard with profound attention, and could not help remarking how amply he deserved it in his own opinion. He was evidently a complete coxcomb, of an arrogant and dictatorial stamp, the common curse of your gentry under size. This new translation of Horace, said he, announced here to the public in letters of a yard long, is a prose work, executed by an old college author. The students have taken a great fancy to the book; so as to carry off four editions. But not a copy has been bought by any man of taste! His criticisms were scarcely more candid on any of the other books; he mauled them every one without mercy. It was easy enough to see he was an author! I should not have been sorry to have staid out his harangue, but Don Lewis and Don Felix were not to be left in the lurch. Now they took as little pleasure in this gentleman's remarks as they felt interest in the books which he was Scaligerising, so that they took a quiet leave of him and the university.

We returned home at dinner-time. My mistress sat down at table with Pacheco, and dexterously turned the conversation on her private concerns. My father, said she, is a younger branch of the Mendoza family, settled at Toledo, and my mother is own sister to Donna Kimena de

Guzman, who came to Salamanca some days ago on an affair of business, with her neice Aurora, only daughter of Don Vincent de Guzman, whom possibly you might be acquainted with. No, answered Don Lewis, but I have often heard of him, as well as of your cousin Aurora. Is it true what they say of her? Her wit and beauty are reported to be unrivalled. As for wit, replied Don Felix, she certainly is not wanting, for she has taken great pains to cultivate her mind. But her beauty is by no means to be boasted of; indeed, we are thought to be very much alike. If that is the case, exclaimed Pacheco, she cannot be behindhand with her reputation. Your features are regular, your complexion almost too fine for a man; your cousin must be an absolute enchantress. I should like to see and converse with her. That you shall, if I have any interest in the family, and this very day too, replied the little Proteus of a Mendoza. We will go and see my aunt after dinner.

My mistress took the first opportunity of changing the topic, and conversing on indifferent subjects. In the afternoon, while the two friends were getting ready to go and call on Donna Kimena, I played the scout, and ran before to prepare the duenna for her visitors. But there was no time to be lost on my return, for Don Felix was waiting for me to attend Don Lewis and him on their way to his aunt's. No sooner had they stepped over the threshold than they were encountered by the adroit old lady, making signs to them to walk as softly as possible. Hush! hush! said she, in a low voice, you will waken my niece. Ever since yesterday she has had a dreadful headache, but is just now a little better; and the poor girl has been taking a little sleep for the last quarter of an hour. I am sorry for this unlucky accident, said Mendoza, I was in hopes we should have seen my cousin. Besides, I meant to have introduced my friend Pacheco. There is no such great hurry on that account, answered Ortiz with a significant smile, and if that is all, you may defer it till to-morrow. The gentlemen did not trouble the old lady with a long visit, but took their leave as soon as they decently could.

Don Lewis took us to see a young gentleman of his acquaintance, by name Don Gabriel de Pedros. There we stayed the remainder of the day, and took our suppers.

About two o'clock in the morning we sallied forth on our return home. We had got about half-way, when we stumbled against something on the ground, and discovered two men stretched at their length in the street. We concluded they had fallen under the knife of the assassin, and stopped to assist them, if yet within reach of assistance. As we were looking about to inform ourselves of their condition, as nearly as the darkness of the night would allow, the patrole came up. The officer took us at first for the murderers, and ordered his people to surround us; but he mended his opinion of us on the sound of our voices, and by favour of a dark lantern held up to the faces of Mendoza and Pacheco. His myrmidons, by his direction, examined the two men, whom our fancies had painted as in the agonies of death, but it turned out to be a fat licentiate with his servant, both of them overtaken in their cups, and not dead, but dead drunk. Gentlemen, exclaimed one of the posse, this jolly fellow is an acquaintance of mine. What! do you not know Signor Guyomer the licentiate, head of our university? With all his imperfections he is a great character, a man of superior genius. He is as staunch as a hound at a philosophical dispute, and his words flow like a gutter after a hail-storm. He has but three foibles in which he indulges; intoxication, litigation, and fornication. He is now returning from supper at his Isabella's, whence, the more is the pity, the drunk was leading the drunk, and they both fell into the kennel. Before the good licentiate came to the headship this happened continually. Though manners make the man, honours, you perceive, do not always mend the manners. We left these drunkards in custody of the patrole, who carried them safe home, and betook ourselves to our lodging and our beds.

Don Felix and Don Lewis were stirring about mid-day. Aurora de Guzman was the first topic of their conversation. Gil Blas, said my mistress to me, run to my aunt, Donna Kimena, and ask if there is any admission for Signor Pacheco and me to-day, we want to see my cousin. Off I went to acquit myself of this commission, or rather to concert the plan of the campaign with the duenna. We had no sooner laid our heads together to the purpose intended, than I was once more at the elbow of the false Mendoza. Sir, quoth I, your cousin Aurora has got about

wonderfully. She enjoined me from her own lips to acquaint you, that your visit could not be otherwise than highly acceptable, and Donna Kimena desired me to assure Signor Pacheco, that any friend of yours would always meet with an hospitable reception.

These last words evidently tickled Don Lewis's fancy. My mistress saw that the bait was swallowed, and prepared herself to haul the prey to shore. Just before dinner, a servant made his appearance from Signora Kimena, and said to Don Felix—My lord, a man from Toledo has been inquiring after you, and has left this note at your aunt's house. The pretended Mendoza opened it, and read the contents aloud to the following effect—" If your father and family still live in your remembrance, and you wish to hear of their concerns, do not fail, on the receipt of this, to call at the Black Horse, near the university." I am too much interested, said he, in these proffered communications, not to satisfy my curiosity at once. Without ceremony, Pacheco, you must excuse me for the present; if I am not back again here within two hours, you may find your way by yourself to my aunt's; I will join the party in the evening. You recollect Gil Blas' message from Donna Kimena, the visit is no more than what will be expected from you. After having thrown out this hint, he left the room, and ordered me to follow him.

It can scarcely be necessary to apprise the reader, that instead of marching down to the Black Horse, we filed off to our other quarters. The moment that we got within doors, Aurora tore off her artificial hair, washed the charcoal from her eyebrows, resumed her female attire, and shone in all her natural charms, a lovely dark-complexioned girl. So complete indeed had been her disguise that Aurora and Don Felix could never have been suspected of identity. The lady seemed to have the advantage of the gentleman even in stature, thanks to a good high pair of heels, to which she was not a little indebted. It was her first business to heighten her personal graces with all the embellishments of art; after which she looked out for Don Lewis, in a state of agitation, compounded of fear and of hope. One instant she felt confident in her wit and beauty; the next she anticipated the failure of her attempt. Ortiz, on her part, set her best foot foremost, and was determined to play up to

my mistress. As for me, Pacheco was not to see my knave's face till the last act of the farce, for which the great actors are always reserved, to unravel the intricacy of the plot; so I went out immediately after dinner.

In short, the puppet-show was all adjusted against Don Lewis's arrival. He experienced a very gracious reception from the old lady, in amends for whose tediousness he was blessed with two or three hours of Aurora's delightful conversation. When they had been together long enough, in popped I, with a message to the enamoured spark. My lord, my master Don Felix begs you ten thousand pardons, but he cannot have the pleasure of waiting on you here this evening. He is with three men of Toledo, from whom he cannot possibly get away. Oh! the wicked little rogue, exclaimed Donna Kimena; as sure as a gun then he is going to make a night of it. No, madam, replied I, they are deeply engaged in very serious business. He is really distressed that he cannot pay his respects, and commissioned me to say everything proper to your ladyship and Donna Aurora. Oh! I will have none of his excuses, pouted out my mistress, he knows very well that I have been indisposed, and might shew some slight degree of feeling for so near a relation. As a punishment, he shall not come near me for this fortnight. Nay, madam, interposed Don Lewis, such a sentence is too severe. Don Felix's fate is but too pitiable, in having been deprived of your society this evening.

They bandied about their fine speeches on these little topics of gallantry for some time, and then Pacheco withdrew. The lovely Aurora metamorphosed herself in a twinkling, and resumed her swashing outside. The grass did not grow under her feet while she was running to the other lodging. I have a million of apologies to make, my dear friend, said she to Don Lewis, for not giving you the meeting at my aunt's; but there was no getting rid of the tiresome people I was with. However, there is one comfort, you have had so much the more leisure to look about you, and criticise my cousin's beauty. Well! and how do you like her? She is a most lovely creature, answered Pacheco. You were in the right to claim a resemblance to her. I never saw more correspondent features; the very same cast of countenance, the eyes exactly alike, the mouth

evidently a family feature, and the tone of voice scarcely to be distinguished. The likeness, however, goes no further, for Aurora is taller than you, she is brown and you are fair, you are a jolly fellow, she has a little touch of the demure; so that you are not altogether the male and female Sosias. As for good sense, continued he, if an angel from heaven were to whisper wisdom in one ear, and your cousin her mortal chit-chat in the other, I am afraid the angel might whistle for an audience. In a word, Aurora is all-accomplished.

Signor Pacheco uttered these last words with so earnest an expression, that Don Felix said with a smile—My friend, I advise you to stay away from Donna Kimena's, it will be more for your peace of mind. Aurora de Guzman may set your wits a wandering, and inspire a passion. . . .

I have no need of seeing her again, interrupted he, to became distractedly enamoured of her. I am sorry for you, replied the pretended Mendoza, for you are not a man to be seriously caught, and my cousin is not to be made a fool of, take my word for it. She would never encourage a lover whose designs were otherwise than honourable. Otherwise than honourable! retorted Don Lewis; who could have the audacity to form such on a lady of her rank and character? As for me, I should esteem myself the happiest of mankind, could she be prevailed on to favour my addresses, and link her fate with mine.

Since those are your sentiments, rejoined Don Felix, you may command my services. Yes, I will go heart and hand with you in the business. All my interest in Aurora shall be yours; and by to-morrow morning I will commence an attack on my aunt, whose good word has more influence than you may think. Pacheco returned his thanks with the best air possible to this young go-between, and we were all agog at the promising appearance of our stratagem. On the following day we found the means of heightening the dramatic effect by entangling the plot a little more. My mistress, after having waited on Donna Kimena, as if to speak a good word in favour of the suitor, came back with the result of the interview. I have spoken to my aunt, said she, but it was as much as I could do to make her hear your proposal with patience. She was primed and loaded against you. Some good-natured friend in the dark has

painted you out for a reprobate; but I took your part with some little quickness, and at length succeeded in vindicating your moral character from the attack it has sustained.

This is not all, continued Aurora. You had better enter on the subject with my aunt in my presence, we shall be able to make something of her between us. Pacheco was all impatience to insinuate himself into the good graces of Donna Kimena; nor was the opportunity deferred beyond the next morning. Our amphibious Mendoza escorted him into the presence of Dame Ortiz, where such a conversation passed between the trio as put fire and tow to the combustible heart of Don Lewis. Kimena, a veteran performer, took the cue of sympathy at every expression of tenderness, and promised the enamoured youth that it should not be her fault if his plea with her niece was urged in vain. Pacheco threw himself at the feet of so good an aunt, and thanked her for all her favours. In this stage of the business Don Felix asked if his cousin was up. No, replied the Duenna, she is still in bed, and is not likely to be down-stairs while you stay; but call again after dinner, and you shall have a tête-à-tête with her to your heart's content. It is easy to imagine that so coming on a proposal from the dragon which was to guard this inaccessible treasure, produced its full complement of joy in the heart of Don Lewis. The remainder of the long morning had nothing to do but to be sworn at! He went back to his own lodging with Mendoza, who was not a little enraptured to observe, with the scrutinizing eye of a mistress under the disguise of a friend, all the symptoms of an incurable amorous infirmity.

Their tongues ran on no earthly subject but Aurora. When they had done dinner, Don Felix said to Pacheco—A thought has just struck me. It would not be amiss for me to go to my aunt's a few minutes before you; I will get to speak to my cousin in private, and pry, if it be possible, into every fold and winding of her heart, as far as your interests are concerned. Don Lewis just chimed in with this idea, so that he suffered his friend to set out first, and did not follow him till an hour afterwards. My mistress availed herself so diligently of the interval, that she was tricked out as a lady from heel to point before the arrival of her lover. I beg pardon. . . . said the poor abused inamo-

rato, after having paid his compliments to Aurora and the Duenna . . . . I took it for granted Don Felix would be here. You will see him in a few seconds, answered Donna Kimena, he is writing in my closet. Pacheco was easily put off with the excuse, and found his time pass cheerfully in conversation with the ladies. And yet, notwithstanding the presence of all his soul held dear, it seemed very strange that hour after hour glided away but no Mendoza stepped forth from the closet! He could not help remarking, that the gentleman's correspondence must be unusually voluminous, when Aurora's features all at once assumed the broader contour of a laugh, with a delightfully provoking question to Don Lewis—Is it possible that love can be so blind as not to detect the glaring imposition by which it has been deluded? Has my real self made so faint an impression on your senses, that a flaxen peruke and a pencilled eyebrow could carry the farce to such a height as this? But the masquerade is over now. Pacheco, continued she, resuming an air of gravity; you are to learn that Don Felix de Mendoza and Aurora de Guzman are but one and the same person.

It was not enough to discover to him all the springs and contrivances by which he had been duped; she confessed the motives of tender partiality that led her to the attempt, and detailed the progress of the plot to the winding up of the catastrophe. Don Lewis scarcely knew whether to be most astonished or delighted at the recital; at my mistress's feet he thus uttered the transports of his fond applause—Ah! lovely Aurora, can I believe myself indeed the happy mortal on whom your favours have been so lavished? What can I do to make you amends for them? My affection, were this life eternal, could scarcely pay the price. These pretty speeches were followed by a thousand others of the same quality and texture; after which the lovers descended a little nearer to common sense, and began planning the rational and human means of arriving at the accomplishment of their wishes. It was resolved that we should set out without loss of time for Madrid, where marriage was to drop the curtain on the last act of our comedy. This purpose was executed in the spirit of impatience which conceived it; so that Don Lewis was united to my mistress in a fortnight, and the nuptial ceremonies were graced

with the usual accompaniments of music, feasting, balls, and rejoicings, without either end or respite.

CHAPTER VII

GIL BLAS LEAVES HIS PLACE AND GOES INTO THE SERVICE OF DON GONZALES PACHECO

THREE weeks after marriage, my mistress bethought herself of rewarding the services I had rendered her. She made me a present of a hundred pistoles, telling me at the same time—Gil Blas, my good fellow, it is not that I mean to turn you away, for you have my free leave to stay here as long as you please; but my husband has an uncle, Don Gonzales Pacheco, who wants you very much for a valet-de-chambre. I have given you so excellent a character, that he would let me have no peace till I consented to part with you. He is a very worthy old nobleman, so that you will be quite in your element in his family.

I thanked Aurora for all her kindness; and, as my occupation was over about her, I so much the more readily accepted the post that offered, as it was merely a transfer from one branch of the Pachecos to another. One morning, therefore, I called on the illustrious Don Gonzales with a message from the bride. He ought at least to have overslept himself, for he was in bed at near noon. When I went into his chamber, a page had just brought him a basin of soup which he was taking. The dotard cherished his whiskers, or rather tortured them with curling-papers; though his eyes were sunk in their sockets, his complexion pale, and his visage emaciated. This was one of those old codgers who have been a little whimsical or so in their youth, and have made poor amends for their freedoms by the discretion of their riper age. His reception of me was affable enough, with an assurance that if my attachment to him kept pace with my fidelity to his niece, my condition should not be worse than that of my fellows. I promised to place him in my late mistress's shoes, and became the working partner in a new firm.

A new firm it undoubtedly was, and heaven knows we had a strange head of the house. The resurrection of

Lazarus was an ordinary event compared to his getting up. Imagine to yourself a long bag of dry bones, a mere skeleton, a dissection, an anatomy of a man; a study in osteology! As for the legs, three or four pair of stockings one over the other, had no room to make any figure upon them. In addition to the foregoing, this mummy before death was asthmatic, and therefore obliged to divide the little breath he had between his cough and his loquacity. He breakfasted on chocolate. On the strength of that refreshment, he ventured to call for pen, ink, and paper, and to write a short note, which he sealed and sent to its address by the page who had administered the broth. But this henceforth will be your office, my good lad, said he, as he turned his haggard eyes upon me; all my little concerns will be in your hands, and especially those in which Donna Euphrasia takes an interest. That lady is an enchanting young creature, with whom I am distractedly in love, and by whom, though I say it who should not say it, I am met with all the mutual ardour of inextinguishable and unutterable passion.

Heaven defend us! thought I within myself: good now! if this old antidote to rapture can fancy himself an object on which the fair should waste their sweets, is it any wonder that among our young folks each fancies himself the Adonis, for whom every Venus pines? Gil Blas, pursued he with a chuckle, this very day will I take you to this abode of pleasure; it is my house of call almost every evening for a bit of supper. You will be quite petrified at her modest appearance, and the rigid propriety of her behaviour. Far from taking after those little wanton vagrants, who are hey-go-mad after striplings, and give themselves up to the fascinations of exterior appearance, she has a proper insight into things, staid, ripe, and judicious: what she wants is the bonâ fide spirit and discretion of a man; a lover who has served an apprenticeship to his trade, in preference to all the flashy fellows of the modern school. This is but an epitome of the panegyric, which the noble dupe Don Gonzales pronounced upon his mistress. He burdened himself with the task of proving her a compendium of all human perfection; but the lecture was little calculated for the conviction of the hearer. I had attended an experimental course among the actresses; and had

always found that the elderly candidates had been plucked in their amours. Yet, as a matter of courtesy, it was impossible not to put on the semblance of giving implicit credit to my master's veracity; I even added chivalry to courtesy, and threw down my glove on Euphrasia's penetration and the correctness of her taste. My impudence went the length of asserting, that it was impossible for her to have selected a better-provided crony. The grown-up simpleton was not aware that I was fumigating his nostrils at the expense of his addled brain; on the contrary, he bristled at my praises; so true is it, that a flatterer may play what game he likes against the pigeons of high life! They let you look over their hand, and then wonder that you beat them.

The old crawler, having scribbled through his billet-doux, restrained the luxuriance of a straggling hair or two with his tweezers; then bathed his eyes in the nostrum of some perfumer to give them a brilliancy which their natural gum would have eclipsed. His ears were to be picked and washed, and his hands to be cleansed from the effects of his other ablutions; and the labours of the toilette were to be closed, by pencilling every remaining hair in the disforested domain of his whiskers, pericranium, and eyebrows. No old dowager, with a purse to buy a second husband, ever took more pains to assure herself by the cultivation of her charms, that the person and not the fortune should be the object of attraction. The assassin stab of time was parried by the quart and tierce of art. Just as he had done making himself up, in came another old fogram of his acquaintance, by name the Count of Asumar. This genius made no secret of his grey locks; leant upon a stick, and seemed to plume himself on his venerable age instead of wishing to appear in the hey-day of his prime. Signor Pacheco, said he as he came in, I am come to take pot-luck with you to-day. You are always welcome, count, rejoined my master. No sooner said than done! they embraced with a thousand grimaces, took their seats opposite to one another, and began chatting till dinner was served.

Their conversation turned at first upon a bull-feast which had taken place a few days before. They talked about the cavaliers, and who among them had displayed most

dexterity and vigour; whereupon the old count, like another Nestor, whom present events furnish with a topic of expatiating on the past, said with a deep-drawn sigh: Alas! where will you meet with men now-a-days, fit to hold a candle to my contemporaries? The public diversions are a mere bauble, to what they were when I was a young man. I could not help chuckling in my sleeve at my good lord of Asumar's whim; for he did not stop at the handywork of human invention. Would you believe it? At table, when the fruit was brought in, at the sight of some very fine peaches, this ungrateful consumer of the earth's produce exclaimed: In my time, the peaches were of a much larger size than they are now; but nature sinks lower and lower from day to day. If that is the case, said Don Gonzales with a sneer, Adam's hot-house fruit must have been of a most unwieldy circumference.

The Count of Asumar staid till quite evening with my master, who had no sooner got rid of him, than he sallied forth with me in his train. We went to Euphrasia's, who lived within a stone's throw of our house, and found her lodged in a style of the first elegance. She was tastefully dressed, and for the youthfulness of her air might have been taken to be in her teens, though thirty bonny summers at least had poured their harvests in her lap. She had often been reckoned pretty, and her wit was exquisite. Neither was she one of your brazenfaced jilts, with nothing but flimsy balderdash in their talk, and a libertine forwardness in their manners: here was modesty of carriage as well as propriety of discourse; and she threw out her little sallies in the most exquisite manner, without seeming to aspire beyond natural good sense. Oh heaven! said I, is it possible that a creature of so virtuous a stamp by nature should have abandoned herself to vicious courses for a livelihood? I had taken it for granted, that all women of light character carried the mark of the beast upon their foreheads. It was a surprise therefore to see such apparent rectitude of conduct; neither did it occur to me that these hacks for all customers could go at any pace, and assume the polish of well-bred society, to impose upon their cullies of the higher ranks. What if a lively petulance should be the order of the day? they are lively and petulant. Should modesty take its turn in the round of fashion, nothing can

exceed their outward show of prudent and delicate reserve. They play the comedy of love in many masks; and are the prude, the coquette, or the virago, as they fall in with the quiz, the coxcomb, or the bully.

Don Gonzales was a gentleman and a man of taste; he could not stomach those beauties who call a spade a spade. Such were not for his market; the rites of Venus must be consummated in the temple of Vesta. Euphrasia had got up her part accordingly, and proved by her performance that there is no comedy like that of real life. I left my master, like another Numa with his Egeria, and went down into a hall, where whom should fortune throw in my way but an old abigail, whom I had formerly known as maid-of-all-work to an actress? The recognition was mutual. So! well met once more, Signor Gil Blas, said she. Then you have turned off Arsenia, just as I have parted with Constance. Yes, truly, answered I, it is a long while ago since I went away, and exchanged her service for that of a very different lady. Neither the theatre nor the people about it are to my taste. I gave myself my own discharge, without condescending to the slightest explanation with Arsenia. You were perfectly in the right, replied the new-found abigail, called Beatrice. That was pretty much my method of proceeding with Constance. One morning early, I gave in my accounts with a very sulky air; she took them from me in moody silence, and we parted in a sort of well-bred dudgeon.

I am quite delighted, said I, that we have met again, where we need not be ashamed of our employers. Donna Euphrasia looks for all the world like a woman of fashion, and I am much deceived if she has not reputation too. You are too clear-sighted to be deceived, answered the old appendage to sin. She is of a good family; and as for her temper, I can assure you it is unparalleled for evenness and sweetness. None of your termagant mistresses, never to be pleased, but always grumbling and scolding about everything, making the house ring with their clack, and fretting poor servants to a thread, whose places, in short, are a hell upon earth! I have not in all this time heard her raise her voice on any occasion whatever. When things happen not to be done exactly in her way, she sets them to rights without any anger, nor does any of that bad lan-

guage escape her lips, of which some high-spirited ladies are so liberal. My master, too, rejoined I, is very mild in his disposition; the very milk of human kindness; and in this respect we are, between ourselves, much better off than when we lived among the actresses. A thousand times better, replied Beatrice; my life used to be all bustle and distraction; but this place is an actual hermitage. Not a creature darkens our doors but this excellent Don Gonzales. You will be my only helpmate in my solitude, and my lot is but too greatly blessed. For this long time have I cherished an affection for you: and many a time and oft have I begrudged that Laura the felicity of engrossing you for her sweetheart; but in the end I hope to be even with her. If I cannot boast of youth and beauty like hers, to balance the account, I detest coquetry, and have all the constancy as well as affection of a turtle-dove.

As honest Beatrice was one of those ladies who are obliged to hawk their wares, and cheapen themselves for want of cheapeners in the market, I was happily shielded from any temptation to break the commandments. Nevertheless, it might not have been prudent to let her see in what contempt her charms were held: for which reason I forced my natural politeness so far, as to talk to her in a style not to cut off all hope of my more serious advances. I flattered myself then, that I had found favour in the eyes of an old dresser to the stage: but pride was destined to have a fall, even on so humble an occasion. The domestic trickster did not sharpen her allurements, from any longing for my pretty person; her design in subduing me to the little soft god was to enlist me for the purposes of her mistress, to whom she had sworn so passive an obedience, that she would have sold her eternal self to the old chapman, who first set up the trade of sin, rather than have disappointed her slightest wishes. My vain conceit was sufficiently evident on the very next morning, when I carried an Ovidian letter from my master to Euphrasia. The lady gave me an affable reception, and made a thousand pretty speeches, echoed from the practised lips of her chambermaid. The expression of my countenance was peculiarly interesting to the one: but that within which passeth shew was the flattering theme of the other. According to their account, the fortunate Don Gonzales

had picked up a treasure. In short, my praises ran so high, that I began to think worse of myself than I had ever done in the whole course of my life. Their motive was sufficiently obvious; but I was determined to play at diamond cut diamond. The simper of a simpleton is no bad countermine to the attack of a sharper. These ladies under favour were of the latter description, and they soon began to open their batteries.

Hark you, Gil Blas, said Euphrasia, fortune declares in your favour if you do not balk her. Let us put our heads together, my good friend. Don Gonzales is old, and a good deal shaken in constitution; so that a very little fever, in the hands of a very great doctor, would carry him to a better place. Let us take time by the forelock, and ply our arts so busily as to secure to me the largest slice of his effects. If I prosper, you shall not starve, I promise you; and my bare word is a better security than all the deeds and conveyances of all the lawyers in Madrid. Madam, answered I, you have but to command me. Give me my commission on your muster-roll, and you shall have no reason to complain either of my cowardice or contumacy. So be it, then, replied she. You must watch your master, and bring me an account of all his comings and goings. When you are chatting together in his more familiar moments, never fail to lead the conversation on the subject of our sex; and then by an artful, but seemingly natural transition, take occasion to say all the good you can invent of me. Ring Euphrasia in his ears till all the house re-echoes. I would counsel you besides to keep a wary eye on all that passes in the Pacheco family. If you catch any relation of Don Gonzales sneaking about him, with a design on the inheritance, bring me word instantly: that is all you have to do, and trust me for sinking, burning, and destroying him in less than no time. I have ferreted out the weak side of all your master's relations long ago; they are each of them to be made ridiculous in some shape or other; so that the nephews and cousins, after sitting to me for their portraits, are already turned with their faces to the wall.

It was evident by these instructions, with many more to the same time and tune, that Euphrasia was one of those ladies whose partialities all lean to the side of elderly

inamoratos, with more money than wit. Not long before, Don Gonzales, who could refuse nothing to the tender passion, had sold an estate; and she pocketed the cash. Not a day passed, but she got some little personal remembrance out of him; and besides all this, a corner of his will was the ultimate object of her speculation. I affected to engage hand over head in their infamous plot; and if I must confess all without mental reservation, it was almost a moot point, on my return home, on which side of the cause I should take a brief. There was on either a profitable alternative; whether to join in fleecing my master, or to merit his gratitude by rescuing him from the plunderers. Conscience, however, seemed to have some little concern in the determination; it was quite ridiculous to choose the by-path of villany when there was a better toll to be taken on the highway of honesty. Besides, Euphrasia had dealt too much in generals; an arithmetical definition of so much for so much has more meaning in it than "all the wealth of the Indies;" and to this shrewd reflection, perhaps, was owing my uncorrupted probity. Thus did I resolve to signalize my zeal in the service of Don Gonzales, in the persuasion that if I was lucky enough to disgust the worshipper by befouling his idol, it would turn to very good account. On a statement of debtor and creditor between the right and the wrong side of the action, the money balance was visibly in favour of virtue, not to mention the delights of a fair and irreproachable character.

If vice so often assumes the semblance of its contrary, why should not hypocrisy now and then change sides for variety? I held myself up to Euphrasia for a thorough swindler. She was dupe enough to believe that I was incessantly talking of her to my master; and thereupon I wove a tissue of frippery and falsehood, which imposed on her for sterling truth. She had so completely given herself up to my insinuations, as to believe me her convert, her disciple, her confederate. The better still to carry on this fraud upon fraud, I affected to languish for Beatrice; and she, in ecstacy at her age to see a young fellow at her skirts, did not much trouble herself about my sincerity, if I did but play my part with vigour and address. When we were in the presence of our princesses, my master in the parlour and myself in the kitchen, the effect was that

of two different pictures, but of the same school. Don Gonzales, dry as touchwood, with all its inflammability, and nothing but its smother, seemed a fitter subject for extreme unction than for amorous parley; while my little pet, in proportion to the violence of my flame, niggled, nudged, toyed, and romped, like a school-girl in vacation; and no wonder she knew her lesson so pat, for the old coquette had been upwards of forty years in the form. She had finished her studies under certain professors of gallantry, whose art of pleasing becomes the more critical by practice; till they die under the accumulated experience of two or three generations.

It was not enough for me to go every evening with my master to Euphrasia's: it was sometimes my lounge even in day-time. But let me pop my head in at what hour I would, that forbidden creature man was never there, nor even a woman of any description, that might not be just as easily expressed as understood. There was not the least loop-hole for a paramour! a circumstance not a little perplexing to one who could not readily believe, that so pretty a bale of goods could submit to a strict monopoly, by such a dealer as Don Gonzales. This opinion undoubtedly was formed on a near acquaintance with female nature, as will be apparent in the sequel; for the fair Euphrasia, while waiting for my master's translation, fortified herself with patience in the arms of a lover, with some little fellow-feeling for the frailties of her age.

One morning I was carrying, according to custom, a note to this peerless pattern of perfection. There certainly were, or I was not standing in the room, the feet of a man ensconced behind the tapestry. Out slunk I, just as if I had no eyes in my head; yet, though such a discovery was nothing but what might have been expected, neither was the piper to be paid out of my pocket, my feelings were a good deal staggered at the breach of faith. Ah! traitress, exclaimed I with virtuous indignation, abandoned Euphrasia! Not satisfied to humbug a silly old gentleman with a tale of love, you share his property in your person with another, and add profligacy to dissimulation! But to be sure, on after-thoughts, I was but a greenhorn, when I took on so for such a trivial occurrence! It was rather a subject for mirth than for moral

reflection, and perfectly justified by the way of the world; the languid, embargoed commerce of my master's amorous moments had need be fillipped by a trade in some more merchantable wares. At all events it would have been better to have held my tongue, than to have laid hold on such an opportunity of playing the faithful servant. But instead of tempering my zeal with discretion, nothing would serve the turn but taking up the wrongs of Don Gonzales in the spirit of chivalry. On this high principle, I made a circumstantial report of what I had seen, with the addition of the attempt made by Euphrasia to seduce me from my good faith. I gave it in her own words without the least reserve, and put him in the way of knowing all that was to be known of his mistress. He was struck all in a heap by my intelligence, and a faint flash of indignation on his faded cheek seemed to give security, that the lady's infidelity would not go unpunished. Enough, Gil Blas, said he, I am infinitely obliged by your attachment to my service, and your probity is very acceptable to me. I will go to Euphrasia this very moment. I will overwhelm her with reproaches, and break at once with the ungrateful creature. With these words, he actually bent his way to the subject of his anger; and dispensed with my attendance, from the kind motive of sparing me the awkwardness which my presence during their explanation would have occasioned to my feelings.

I longed for my master's return with all the impatience of an interested person. There could not be a doubt but that with his strong grounds of complaint, he would return completely disentangled from the snares of his nymph. In this thought I extolled and magnified myself for my good deed. What could be more flattering than the thanks of the kindred who were naturally to inherit after Don Gonzales, when they should be informed that their relative was no longer the puppet of a figure-dance so hostile to their interests? It was not to be supposed but that such a friend would be remembered, and that my merits would at last be distinguished from those of other serving-men, who are usually more disposed to encourage their masters in licentiousness, than to draw them off to habits of decency. I was always of an aspiring temper, and thought to have passed for the Joseph or the Scipio of the servants' hall;

but so fascinating an idea was only to be indulged for an hour or two. The founder of my fortunes came home. My friend, said he, I have had a very sharp brush with Euphrasia. She insists on it that you have trumped up a cock-and-bull story. If their word is to be taken, you are no better than an impostor, a hireling in the pay of my nephews, for whose sake you have set all your wits at work to bring about a quarrel between her and me. I have seen the real tears, made of water, run down in floods from her poor dear eyes. She has vowed to me as solemnly as if I had been her confessor, that she never made any overtures to you in her life, and that she does not know what man is. Beatrice, who seems a simple, innocent sort of girl, is exactly in the same story, so that I could not but believe them and be pacified, whether I would or no.

How then, sir? interrupted I, in accents of undissembled sorrow, do you question my sincerity? Do you distrust . . . . No, my good lad, interrupted he again in his turn, I will do you ample justice. I do not suspect you of being in league with my nephews. I am satisfied that all you have done has been for my good, and own myself much obliged to you for it; but appearances are apt to mislead, so that perhaps you did not see in reality what you took it into your head that you saw; and in that case, only consider yourself how offensive your charge must be to Euphrasia. Yet let that be as it will, she is a creature whom I cannot help loving in spite of my senses; so that the sacrifice she demands must be made, and that sacrifice is no less than your dismission. I lament it very much, my poor dear Gil Blas, and if that will be any satisfaction to you, my consent was wrung from me most unwillingly; but there was no saying nay. With one thing, however, you may comfort yourself, you shall not be sent away with empty pockets. Nay, more, I mean to turn you over to a lady of my acquaintance, where you will live to your liking.

I was not a little mortified to find all my noble acts and motives end in my own confusion. I gave a left-handed blessing to Euphrasia, and wept over the weakness of Don Gonzales, to be so foolishly infatuated by her. The kind-hearted old gentleman felt within himself that in turning me adrift at the peremptory demand of his mistress, he was not performing the most manly action of his life. For

this reason, as a set-off against his hen-pecked cowardice, and that I might the more easily swallow this bitter dose, he gave me fifty ducats, and took me with him next morning to the Marchioness of Chaves, telling that lady before my face, that I was a young man of unexceptionably good character, and very high in his good graces, but that as certain family reasons prevented him from continuing me on his own establishment, he should esteem it as a favour if she would take me on hers. After such an introduction, I was retained at once as her appendage, and found myself, I scarcely knew how, established in another household.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MARCHIONESS OF CHAVES: HER CHARACTER, AND THAT OF HER COMPANY

The Marchioness of Chaves was a widow of five-and-thirty, tall, handsome, and well-proportioned. She enjoyed an income of ten thousand ducats, without the incumbrance of a nursery. I never met with a lady of fewer words, nor one of a more solemn aspect. Yet this exterior did not prevent her from being set up as the cleverest woman in all Madrid. Her great assemblies, attended by people of the first quality, and by men of letters who made a coffee-house of her apartments, contributed perhaps more than anything she said to give her the reputation she had acquired. But this is a point on which it is not my province to decide. I have only to relate, as her historian, that her name carried with it the idea of superior genius, and that her house was called, to distinguish it from the ordinary societies in town, The Fashionable Institution for Literature, Taste, and Science.

In point of fact, not a day passed, but there were readings there, sometimes of dramatic pieces, and sometimes in other branches of poetry. But the subjects were always selected from the graver muses; wit and humour were held in the most sovereign contempt. Comedy, however spirited; a novel, however pointed in its satire or ingenious in its fable, such light productions as these were treated as weak efforts of the brain without the slightest claim to

patronage; whereas on the contrary the most microscopical work in the serious style, whether ode, pastoral, or sonnet, was trumpeted to the skies as the most illustrious effort of a learned and poetical age. It not unfrequently fell out, that the public reversed the decrees of this chancery for genius: nay, they had sometimes the gross ill-breeding to hiss the very pieces which had been sanctioned by this court of criticism.

I was chief manager of the establishment, and my office consisted in getting the drawing-room ready to receive the company, in setting the chairs in order for the gentlemen, and the sofas for the ladies: after which I took my station on the landing-place to bawl out the names of the visitors as they came upstairs, and usher them into the circle. The first day, an old piece of family furniture, who was stationed by my side in the ante-chamber, gave me their description with some humour, after I had shown them into the room. His name was Andrew Molina. He had a good deal of mother's wit, with a flowing vein of satire, much gravity of sarcasm, and a happy knack at hitting off characters. The first comer was a bishop. I roared out his lordship's name, and as soon as he was gone in, my nomenclator told me—That prelate is a very curious gentleman. He has some little influence at court; but wants to persuade the world that he has a great deal. He presses his service on every soul he comes near, and then leaves them completely in the lurch. One day he met with a gentleman in the presence-chamber who bowed to him. He laid hold of him, and squeezing his hand, assured him, with an inundation of civilities, that he was altogether devoted to his lordship. For goodness' sake, do not spare me; I shall not die in my bed without having first found an opportunity of making you my debtor. The gentleman returned his thanks with all becoming expressions of gratitude, and when they were at some distance from one another, the obsequious churchman said to one of his attendants in waiting—I ought to know that man; I have some floating, indistinct idea of having seen him somewhere.

Next after the bishop, came the son of a grandee. When I had introduced him into my lady's room—This nobleman, said Molina, is also an original in his way. You are to take notice that he often pays a visit, for the express

purpose of talking over some urgent business with the friend on whom he calls, and goes away again without once thinking on the topic he came solely to discuss. But, added my showman on the sight of two ladies, here are Donna Angela de Penafiel and Donna Margaretta de Montalvan. This pair have not a feature of resemblance to each other. Donna Margaretta prides herself on her philosophical acquirements; she will hold her head as high as the most learned head among the doctors of Salamanca, nor will the wisdom of her conceit ever give up the point to the best reasons they can render. As for Donna Angela, she does not affect the learned lady, though she has taken no unsuccessful pains in the improvement of her mind. Her manner of talking is rational and proper, her ideas are novel and ingenious, expressed in polite, significant, and natural terms. This latter portrait is delightful, said I to Molina; but the other, in my opinion, is scarcely to be tolerated in the softer sex. Not over bearable indeed! replied he with a sneer: even in men it does but expose them to the lash of satire. The good marchioness herself, our honoured lady, continued he, she too has a sort of a philosophical looseness. There will be fine chopping of logic there to-day! God grant the mysteries of religion may not be invaded by these disputants.

As he was finishing this last sentence, in came a withered bit of mortality, with a grave and crabbed look. My companion shewed him no mercy. This fellow, said he, is one of those pompous, unbending spirits who think to pass for men of profound genius, under favour of a few commonplaces extracted out of Seneca; yet they are but shallow coxcombs when one comes to examine them narrowly. Then followed in the train a spruce figure, with tolerable person and address, to say nothing of a troubled air and manner, which always supposes a plentiful stock of self-sufficiency. I inquired who this was. A dramatic poet! said Molina. He has manufactured an hundred thousand verses in his time, which never brought him in the value of a groat; but as a set-off against his metrical failure, he has feathered his nest very warmly by six lines of humble prose: you will wonder by what magic touch a fortune could be made. . . .

And so I did; but a confounded noise upon the staircase

put verse and prose completely out of my head. Good again! exclaimed my informer: here is the licentiate Campanario. He is his own harbinger before ever he makes his appearance. He sets out from the very street door in a continued volley of conversation, and you hear how the alarm is kept up till he makes his retreat. In good sooth, the vaulted roof re-echoed with the organ of the thundering licentiate, who at length exhibited the case in which the pipes were contained. He brought a bachelor of his acquaintance by way of accompaniment, and there was not a *sotto voce* passage during the whole visit. Signor Campanario, said I to Molina, is to all appearance a man of very fine conversation. Yes, replied my sage instructor, the gentleman has his lucky hits, and a sort of quaintness that might pass for humour; he does very well in a mixed company. But the worst of it is, that incessant talking is one of his most pardonable errors. He is a little too apt to borrow from himself; and as those who are behind the scenes are not to be dazzled by the tinsel of the property-man, so we know how to separate a certain volubility and buffoonery of manner from sterling wit and sense. The greater part of his good things would be thought very bad ones, if submitted, without their concomitant grimaces, to the ordeal of a jest book.

Other groups passed before us, and Molina touched them with his wand. The marchioness too came in for a magic rap over the knuckles. Our lady patroness, said he, is better than might be expected for a female philosopher She is not dainty in her likings; and bating a whim or too, it is no hard matter to give her satisfaction. Wits and women of quality seldom approach so near the atmosphere of good sense; and for passion, she scarcely knows what it is. Play and gallantry are equally in her black books: dear conversation is her first and sole delight. To lead such a life would be little better than penance to the common run of ladies. Molina's character of my mistress established her at once in my good graces. And yet, in the course of a few days, I could not help suspecting that, though not dainty in her likings, she knew what passion was, and that a foul copy of gallantry delighted her more than the fairest conversation.

One morning, during the mysteries of the toilette, there

presented himself to my notice a little fellow of forty, forbidding in his aspect, more filthy if possible than Pedro de Moya the bookworm, and verging in no marketable measure towards deformity. He told me he wanted to speak with my lady marchioness. On whose business? quoth I. On my own, quoth he, somewhat snappishly. Tell her I am the gentleman; . . . . she will understand you; . . . . about whom she was talking yesterday with Donna Anna de Velasco. I went before him into my lady's apartment, and gave in his name. The marchioness all at once shrieked out her satisfaction, and ordered me to show him in. It was not courtesy enough to point to a chair, and bid him sit down: but the attendants, forsooth, her own maids about her person were to withdraw, so that the little hunchback, with better luck than falls to the lot of many a taller man, had the field entirely to himself, as lord paramount. As for the girls and myself, we could not help tittering a little at this uncouthly concerted duet, which lasted nearly an hour: when my patroness dismissed his little lordship, with such a profusion of farewells and God-be-with-you's, as sufficiently evinced her thankfulness for the entertainment she had received.

The conversation had, in fact, been so edifying, that in the afternoon she seized a private opportunity of whispering in my ear—Gil Blas, when the short gentleman comes again, you may shew him up the back stairs; there is no need of parading him along a line of staring servants. I did as I was ordered. When this epitome of humanity knocked at the door, and that hour was no further off than the next morning, we threaded all the bye passages to the place of assignation. I played the same modest part two or three times in the very innocence of my soul, without the most distant guess that the material system could form any part of their philosophy. But that hound-like snuff at an ill construction, with which the devil has armed the noses of the most charitable, put me on the scent of a very whimsical game, and I concluded either that the marchioness had an odd taste, or that crookback courted her as a proxy to a better man.

Faith and troth, thought I, with all the impertinence of a hasty opinion, if my mistress really likes a handsome fellow behind the curtain, all is well; I forgive her her sins:

but if she is stark mad for such a monkey as this, to say the truth, there will be little mercy for her on male or female tongues. But how foully did I defame my honoured patroness! The genius of magic had perched herself upon the little conjurer's protuberant shoulder; and his skill having been puffed off to the marchioness, who was just the right food for such jugglers and their tricks, she held private conferences with him. Under his tuition she was to command wealth and treasure, to build castles in the air, to remove from place to place in an instant, to reveal future events, to tell what is done in far countries, to call the dead out of their graves, and terrify the world with many miracles. Seriously, and to give him his deserts, the scoundrel lived on the folly of the public; and it has been confidently asserted, that ladies of fashion have not in all ages and countries been exempt from the credulity of their inferiors.

CHAPTER IX

AN INCIDENT THAT PARTED GIL BLAS AND THE MARCHIONESS OF CHAVES. THE SUBSEQUENT DESTINATION OF THE FORMER.

For six months I lived with the Marchioness of Chaves, and, as it must be admitted, on the fat of the land. But fate, who thrusts footmen as well as heroes into the world, with herself tied about their necks, gave me a jog to be gone, and swore that I should stay no longer in that family or in Madrid. The adventure by which this decree was announced shall be the subject of the ensuing narrative.

In my mistress's female squad there was a nymph named Portia. To say nothing of her youth and beauty, it was her meek demeanour and good repute that captivated me, who had yet to learn that none but the brave deserves the fair. The marchioness's secretary, as proud as a prime minister, and as jealous as the Grand Turk, was caught in the same trap as myself. No sooner did he cast an unlucky squint at my advances, than, without waiting to see how Portia might chance to fancy them, he determined pell-mell to have a tilt with me. To forward this ghostly enterprise, he gave me an appointment one morning in

a place sadly impervious to all seasonable interruption. Yet as he was a little go-by-the-ground, scarcely up to my shoulders, and apparently of feeble frame, he did not look like a very dangerous antagonist; so away I went with some little courage to the appointed spot. Thinking to come off with flying colours, I anticipated the effect of my bravery on the heart of Portia; but as it turned out, I was gathering my laurels before they had budded. The little secretary, who had been practising for two or three years at the fencing-school, disarmed me like a very baby, and holding the point of his sword up to my throat, Prepare thyself, said he, to balance thine accounts with this world, and open a correspondence with the next, or give me thy rascally word to leave the Marchioness of Chaves this very day, and never more to think of my Portia. I gave him my rascally word, and was honest enough not to think of breaking it. There was an awkwardness in shewing my face before the servants of the family, after having been worsted; and especially before the high and mighty princess who had been the theme of our tournament. I only returned home to get together my baggage and wages, and on that very day set off towards Toledo, with a purse pretty well lined, and a knapsack at my back with my wardrobe and moveables. Though my rascally word was not given to abandon the purlieus of Madrid, I considered it as a matter of delicacy to disappear, at least for a few seasons. My resolution was to make a tour of Spain, and to halt first at one town and then at another. My ready money, thought I, will carry me a good way; I shall not call about me very prodigally. When my stock is exhausted, I can but go into service again. A lad of my versatility will find places in plenty, whenever it may be convenient to look out for them.

It was particularly my wish to see Toledo: and I got thither after three days' journey. My quarters were at a respectable house of entertainment, where I was taken for a gentleman of some figure, under favour of my best clothes, in which I did not fail to bedizen myself. With the pick-tooth carelessness of a lounger, the affectation of a puppy, and the pertness of a wit, it remained with me to dictate the terms of an arrangement with some very pretty women who infested that neighbourhood; but, as a hint had been given me that the pocket was the high road to their good

graces, my amorous enthusiasm was a little flattered, and, as it was no part of my plan to domesticate myself in any one place, after having seen all the lions at Toledo, I started one morning with the dawn, and took the road to Cuença, intending to go to Arragon. On the second day I went into an inn which stood open to receive me by the road-side. Just as I was beginning to recruit the carnal department of my nature, in came a party belonging to the Holy Brotherhood. These gentlemen called for wine, and set in for a drinking bout. Over their cups they were conning the description of a young man, whom they had orders to arrest. The spark, said one of them, is not above three-and-twenty: he has long black hair, is well grown, with an aquiline nose, and rides a bay horse.

I heard their talk without seeming to be a listener; and, in fact, did not trouble my head much about it. They remained in their quarters, and I pursued my journey. Scarcely had I gone a quarter of a mile, before I met a young gentleman on horseback, as personable as need be, and mounted as described by the officers. Faith and truth, thought I within myself, this is the very identical man. Black hair and an aquiline nose! One cannot help doing a good office when it comes in one's way. Sir, said I, give me leave to ask you whether you have not some disagreeable business on your hands? The young man, without returning any answer, looked at me from head to foot, and seemed startled at my question. I assured him it was not wanton curiosity that induced me to address him. He was satisfied of that when I related all I had heard at the inn. My unknown benefactor, said he, I will not deny to you that I have reason to believe myself actually the person of whom the officers are in quest: therefore I shall take another road to avoid them. In my opinion, answered I, it would be better to look out for a spot where you may be in safety, and under shelter from a storm which is brewing, and will soon pour down upon our heads. Without loss of time we discovered and made for a row of trees, forming a natural avenue, which led us to the foot of a mountain, where we found an hermitage.

There was a large and deep grotto which time had worn away into the heart of the rock; and the hand of man had added a rude front built of pebbles and shell-work, covered

all over with turf. The adjacent grounds were strewed with a thousand sorts of flowers, which scattered their perfume; and one was pleased to see hard by the grotto, a small fissure in the mountain, whence a spring rippled with a tinkling noise, and poured its pellucid stream along the meadow. At the entrance of this solitary abode stood a venerable hermit, seemingly weighed down with years. He supported himself with one hand upon a staff, and held a rosary of large beads with the other, composed of at least twenty rows. His head was almost lost in a brown woollen cap with long ears; and his beard, whiter than snow, swept down in aged majesty to his waist. We advanced towards him. Father, said I, is it your pleasure to allow us shelter from the threatening storm? Come in, my sons, replied the hermit, after examining me attentively; this hermitage is at your service, to occupy it during pleasure. As for your horse, added he, pointing to the court-yard of his mansion, he will be very well off there. My companion disposed of the animal accordingly, and we followed the old man into the grotto.

No sooner had we got in than a heavy rain fell, with a terrific storm of thunder and lightning. The hermit threw himself upon his knees before a consecrated image, fastened to the wall, and we followed the example of our host. Our devotions ceased with the subsiding of the storm; but as the rain continued, though with diminished violence, and night was not far distant, the old man said to us—My sons, you had better not pursue your journey in such weather, unless your affairs are pressing. We answered with one consent, that we had nothing to hinder us from staying there, but the fear of incommoding him; but that if there was room for us in the hermitage, we would thank him for a night's lodging. You may have it without inconvenience, answered the hermit, at least the inconvenience will be all your own. Your accommodation will be rough, and your meals such as a recluse has to offer.

With this cordial welcome to a homely board, the holy personage seated us at a little table, and set before us a few vegetables, a crust of bread, and a pitcher of water. My sons, resumed he, you behold my ordinary fare, but today I will make a feast in hospitality towards you. So saying, he fetched a little cheese and some nuts, which he

threw down upon the table. The young man, whose appetite was not keen, felt but little tempted by his entertainment. I perceive, said the hermit to him, that you are accustomed to better tables than mine, or rather that sensuality has vitiated your natural relish. I have been in the world like you. The utmost ingenuity of the culinary art, whether to stimulate or soothe the palate, was exerted by turns for my gratification. But since I have lived in solitude, my taste has recovered its simplicity. Now, vegetables, fruit, and milk, are my greatest dainties; in a word, I keep an antediluvian table.

While he was haranguing after this fashion, the young man fell into a deep musing. The hermit was aware of his inattention. My son, said he, something weighs upon your spirits. May we not be informed what disturbs you? Open your heart to me. Curiosity is not my motive for questioning you, but charity, and a desire to be of service. I am at a time of life to give advice, and you perhaps are under circumstances to stand in need of it. Yes, father, replied the gentleman with a sigh, I doubtless do stand in need of it, and will follow yours, since you are so good as to offer it; I cannot suppose there is any risk in unbosoming myself to a man like you. No, my son, said the old man, you have nothing to fear, it is under more stately roofs that confidences are betrayed. On this assurance the cavalier began his story.

CHAPTER X

THE HISTORY OF DON ALPHONSO AND THE FAIR SERAPHINA

I WILL attempt no disguise from you, my venerable friend, nor from this gentleman who completes my audience. After the generosity of his conduct towards me, I should be in the wrong to distrust him. You shall know my misfortunes from their beginning. I am a native of Madrid, and came into the world mysteriously. An officer of the German guard, Baron Steinbach by name, returning home one evening, espied a bundle of fair linen at the foot of his staircase. He took it up and carried it to his wife's apartment, where it turned out to be a new-born infant, wrapped

up in very handsome swaddling-clothes, with a note containing an assurance that it belonged to persons of condition, who would come forward and own it at some future period; and the further information that it had been baptized by the name of Alphonso. I was that unfortunate stranger in the world, and this is all that I know about myself. Whether honour or profligacy was the motive of the exposure, the helpless child was equally the victim; whether my unhappy mother wanted to get rid of me, to conceal an habitual course of scandalous amours, or whether she had made a single deviation from the path of virtue with a faithless lover, and had been obliged to protect her fame at the expense of nature and the maternal feelings.

However this might be, the Baron and his wife were touched by my destitute condition, and resolved, as they had no children of their own, to bring me up under the name of Don Alphonso. As I grew in years and stature their attachment to me strengthened. My manners, genteel before strangers and affectionate towards them, were the theme of their fondest panegyric. In short, they loved me as if I had been their own. Masters of every description were provided for me. My education became their leading object; and far from waiting impatiently till my parents should come forward, they seemed, on the contrary, to wish that my birth might always remain a mystery. As soon as the Baron thought me old enough to bear arms, he sent me into the service. With my ensign's commission, a genteel and suitable equipment was provided for me; and, the more effectually to animate me in the career of glory, my patron pointed out that the path of honour was open to every adventurer, and that the renown of a warrior would be so much the more creditable to me, as I should owe it to none but myself. At the same time he laid open to me the circumstances of my birth, which he had hitherto concealed. As I had passed for his son in Madrid, and had actually thought myself so, it must be owned that this communication gave me some uneasiness. I could not then, nor can I even now, think of it without a sense of shame. In proportion as the innate feelings of a gentleman bear testimony to the birth of one, am I mortified at being rejected and renounced by the unnatural authors of my being.

I went to serve in the Low Countries, but peace was concluded in a short time; and Spain finding herself without assailants, though not without assassins, I returned to Madrid, where I received fresh marks of affection from the Baron and his wife. Rather more than two months after my return, a little page came into my room one morning, and presented me with a note couched nearly in the following terms: "I am neither ugly nor crooked, and yet you often see me at my window without the tribute of a glance. This conduct is little in unison with the spirit of your physiognomy, and so far stings me to revenge that I will make you love me if possible."

On the perusal of this epistle, there could be no doubt but it came from a widow, by name Leonora, who lived opposite our house, and had the character of a very great coquette. Hereupon I examined my little messenger, who had a mind to be on the reserve at first, but a ducat in hand opened the floodgates of his intelligence. He even took charge of an answer to his mistress, confessing my guilt, and intimating that its punishment was far advanced.

I was not insensible to a conquest of this kind. For the rest of the day home and my window-seat were the grand attraction; and the lady seemed to have fallen in love with her window-seat too. I made signals. She returned them; and on the very next day sent me word by her little Mercury, that if I would be in the street on the following night between eleven and twelve, I might converse with her at a window on the ground-floor. Though I did not feel myself very much captivated by so coming on a kind of widow, it was impossible not to send such an answer as if I was; and a sort of amorous curiosity made me as impatient as if I had really been in love. In the dusk of the evening, I went sauntering up and down the Prado till the hour of assignation. Before I could get to my appointment, a man mounted on a fine horse alighted near me, and coming up with a peremptory air—Sir, said he, are not you the son of Baron Steinbach? I answered in the affirmative. You are the person then, resumed he, who were to meet Leonora at her window to-night? I have seen her letters and your answers, her page has put them into my hands, and I have followed you this evening from your own house hither, to let you know you have a rival whose pride is not a little

wounded at a competition with yourself in an affair of the heart. It would be unnecessary to say more. We are in a retired place, let us therefore draw, unless, to avoid the chastisement in store for you, you will give me your word to break off all connection with Leonora. Sacrifice in my favour all your hopes and interest, or your life must be the forfeit. It had been better, said I, to have ensured my generosity by good manners, than to extort my compliance by menaces. I might have granted to your request what I must refuse to this insolent demand.

Well, then, resumed he, tying up his horse and preparing for the encounter, let us settle our dispute like men. Little could a person of my condition have stomached the debasement of a request, to a man of your quality. Nine out of ten in my rank would, under such circumstances, have taken their revenge on terms of less honour but more safety. I felt myself exasperated at this last insinuation, so that, seeing he had already drawn his sword, mine did not linger in the scabbard. We fell on one another with so much fury, that the engagement did not last long. Whether his attack was made with too much heat, or my skill in fencing was superior, he soon received a mortal wound. He staggered, and dropped dead upon the spot. In such a situation, having no alternative but an immediate escape, I mounted the horse of my antagonist, and went off in the direction of Toledo. There was no venturing to return to Baron Steinbach's, since, besides the danger of the attempt, the narrative of my adventure from my own mouth would only afflict him the more, so that nothing was so eligible as an immediate decampment from Madrid.

Chewing the cud of my own melancholy reflection, I travelled onwards the remainder of the night and all the next morning. But about noon it became necessary to stop, both for the sake of my horse and to avoid the insupportable fierceness of the mid-day heat. I staid in a village till sunset, and then, intending to reach Toledo without drawing bit, went on my way. I had already got two leagues beyond Illescas, when, about midnight, a storm like that of to-day overtook me as I was jogging along the road. There was a garden wall at some little distance, and I rode up to it. For want of any more commodious shelter, my horse's station and my own were arranged, as comfortably as cir-

cumstances would admit, near the door of a summer-house at the end of the wall, with a balcony over it. Leaning against the door, I discovered it to be open, owing, as I thought, to the negligence of the servants. Having dismounted, less from curiosity than for the sake of a better standing, as the rain had been very troublesome under the balcony, I went into the lower part of the summer-house, leading my horse by the bridle.

My amusement during the storm was in reconnoitring my quarters; and though I had nothing to form an opinion by, but the lurid gleams of the lightning, it was very evident that such a house must belong to some family above the common. I was waiting anxiously till the rain abated, to set forward again on my journey; but a great light at a distance made me change my purpose. Leaving my horse in the summer-house, with the precaution of fastening the door, I made for the light, in the assurance that they were not all gone to bed in the house, and with the intention of requesting a lodging for the night. After crossing several walks I came to a saloon, and here too the door was left open. On my entrance, from the magnificence so handsomely displayed by the light of a fine crystal lustre, it was easy to conclude that this must be the residence of some illustrious nobleman. The pavement was of marble, the wainscot richly carved and gilt, the proportions of architecture tastefully preserved, and the ceiling evidently adorned by the masterpieces of the first artists in fresco. But what particularly engaged my attention was a great number of busts, and those of Spanish heroes, supported on jasper pedestals, and ranged round the saloon. There was opportunity enough for examining all this splendour, since there was not even a foot-fall, nor the shadow of any one gliding along the passage, though my ears and eyes were incessantly on the watch for some inhabitant of this fairy desert.

On one side of the saloon there was a door a-jar; by pushing it a little wider open, I discovered a range of apartments, with a light only in the furthest. What is to be done now? thought I within myself. Shall I go back, or take the liberty of marching forward, even to that chamber? To be sure, it was obvious that the most prudent step would be to make good my retreat; but curiosity was not to be re-

pelled, or rather, to speak more truly, my star was in its ascendant. Advancing boldly from room to room, at length I reached that where the light was. It was a wax taper on a marble slab, in a magnificent candlestick. The first object that caught my eye was the gay furniture of this summer abode; but soon afterwards, casting a look towards a bed, of which the curtains were half undrawn on account of the heat, an object arrested my attention, which engrossed it with the deepest interest. A young lady, in spite of the thunderclaps which had been pealing round her, was sleeping there, motionless and undisturbed. I approached her very gently, and by the light of the taper I had seized, a complexion and features the most dazzling were submitted to my gaze. My spirits were all afloat at the discovery. A sensation of transport and delight came over me; but however my feelings might harass my own heart, my conviction of her high birth checked every presumptuous hope, and awe obtained a complete victory over desire. While I was drinking in floods of adoration at the shrine of her beauty, the goddess of my homage awoke.

You may well suppose her consternation, at seeing a man, an utter stranger in her bedchamber, and at midnight. She was terrified at this strange appearance, and uttered a loud shriek. I did my best to restore her composure, and throwing myself on my knees in the humblest posture, Madam, said I, fear nothing. My business here is not to hurt you. I was going on, but her alarm was so great that she was incapable of hearing my excuses. She called her woman with a most vehement importunity, and as she could get no answer, she threw over her a thin night-gown at the foot of the bed, rushed rapidly out of the room, and darted into the apartments I had crossed, still calling her female establishment about her, as well as a younger sister whom she had under her care. I looked for nothing less than a posse of strapping footmen who were likely, without hearing my defence, to execute summary justice on so audacious a culprit; but by good luck, at least for me, her cries were to no purpose; they only roused an old domestic, who would have been but a sorry knight had any ravisher or magician invaded her repose. Nevertheless, assuming somewhat of courage from his presence, she asked me haughtily who I was, by what inlet and to what purpose I had pre-

sumptuously gained admission into her house. I began then to enter on my exculpation, and had no sooner declared that the open door of the summer-house in the garden had invited my entrance, than she exclaimed as if thunderstruck—Just heaven! what an idea darts across my mind!

As she uttered these words, she caught at the wax light on the table; then ran through all the apartments one after another, without finding either her attendants or her sister. She remarked, too, that all their personals and wardrobe were carried off. With such a comment on her hasty suspicions, she came up to me and said, in the hurried accents of suspense and perturbation: Traitor! add not hypocrisy to your other crimes. Chance has not brought you hither. You are in the train of Don Ferdinand de Leyva, and are an accomplice in his guilt. But hope not to escape, there are still people enough about me to secure you. Madam, said I, do not confound me with your enemies. Don Ferdinand de Leyva is a stranger to me; I do not even know who you are. You see before you an outcast, whom an affair of honour has compelled to fly from Madrid; and I swear by whatever is most sacred among men, that had not a storm overtaken me, I should never have set my foot over your threshold. Entertain, then, a more favourable opinion of me. So far from suspecting me for an accomplice in any plot against you, believe me ready to enlist in your defence, and to revenge your wrongs. These last words, and still more the sincere tone in which they were delivered, convinced the lady of my innocence, and she seemed no longer to look on me as her enemy; but if her anger abated it was only that her grief might sway more absolutely. She began weeping most bitterly. Her tears called forth my sympathy, and my affliction was scarcely less poignant than her own, though the cause of this contagious sorrow was still to be ascertained. Yet it was not enough to mingle my tears with hers; in my impatience to become her defender and avenger, an impulse of terrific fury came over me. Madam, exclaimed I, what outrage have you sustained? Let me know it, and your injuries are mine. Would you have me hunt out Don Ferdinand, and stab him to the heart? Only tell me on whom your justice would fall, and they shall suffer. You have only to give the word. Whatever dangers, what-

ever certain evils may be attendant on the execution of your orders, the unknown, whom you thought to be in league with your enemies, will brave them all in your cause.

This enraptured devotion surprised the lady, and stopped the flowing of her tears. Ah! sir, said she, forgive this suspicion, and attribute it to the blindness of my cruel fate. A nobility of sentiment like this speaks at once to the heart of Seraphina: and while it undeceives, makes me the less repine at a stranger being a witness of an affront offered to my family. Yes, I own my error, and revolt not, unknown as you are, from your proffered aid. But the death of Don Ferdinand is not what I require. Well, then, madam, resumed I, of what nature are the services you would enjoin me? Sir, replied Seraphina, the ground of my complaint is this: Don Ferdinand de Leyva is enamoured of my sister Julia, whom he met with by accident at Toledo, where we for the most part reside. Three months since, he asked her in marriage of the Count de Polan, my father, who refused his consent on account of an old grudge subsisting between the families. My sister is not yet fifteen, she must have been indiscreet enough to follow the evil counsels of my woman, whom Don Ferdinand has doubtless bribed; and this daring ruffian, advertised of our being alone at our country-house, has taken the opportunity of carrying off Julia. At least I should like to know what hiding-place he has chosen to deposit her in, that my father and my brother, who have been these two months at Madrid, may take their measures accordingly. For heaven's sake, added she, give yourself the trouble of examining the neighbourhood of Toledo, an act so heinous cannot escape detection, and my family will owe you a debt of everlasting gratitude.

The lady was little aware how unseasonable an employment she was thrusting upon me. My escape from Castile could not be too soon effected; and yet how should such a reflection ever enter into her head, when it was completely superseded in mine by a more powerful suggestion? Delighted at finding myself important to the most lovely creature in the universe, I caught at the commission with eagerness, and promised to acquit myself of it with equal zeal and industry. In fact, I did not wait for daybreak, to go about fulfilling my engagement. A hasty leave of Sera-

phina gave me occasion to beg her pardon for the alarm I had caused her, and to assure her that she should speedily hear somewhat of my adventure. I went out as I came in, but so wrapped up in admiration of the lady, that it was palpable I was completely caught. My sense of this truth was the more confirmed, by the eagerness with which I embarked in her cause, and by the romantic, gaily-coloured bubbles which my passion blew. It struck my fancy that Seraphina, though engrossed by her affliction, had remarked the hasty birth of my love, without being displeased at the discovery. I even flattered myself that if I could furnish her with any certain intelligence of her sister, and the business should terminate in any degree to her satisfaction, my part in it would be remembered to my advantage.

Don Alphonso broke the thread of his discourse at this passage, and said to our aged host: I beg your pardon, father, if the fulness of my passion should lead me to dilate too long upon particulars, wearisome and uninteresting to a stranger. No, my son, replied the hermit, such particulars are not wearisome: I am interested to know the state and progress of your passion for the young lady you are speaking of; my counsels will be influenced by the minute detail you are giving me.

With my fancy heated by these seductive images, resumed the young man, I was two days hunting after Julia's ravisher: but in vain were all the inquiries that could be made; by no means I could devise was the least trace of him to be discovered. Deeply mortified at the unsuccessful issue of my search, I bent my steps back to Seraphina, whom I pictured to myself as overwhelmed with uneasiness. Yet she was in better spirits than might have been expected. She informed me that her success had been better than mine; for she had learned how her sister was disposed of. She had received a letter from Don Ferdinand himself, importing that after being privately married to Julia, he had placed her in a convent at Toledo. I have sent his letter to my father, pursued Seraphina. I hope the affair may be adjusted amicably, and that a solemn marriage will soon extinguish the feuds which have so long kept our respective families at variance.

When the lady had thus informed me of her sister's fate,

she began making an apology for the trouble she had given me, as well as the danger into which she might imprudently have thrown me, by engaging my services in pursuit of a ravisher, without recollecting what I had told her, that an affair of honour had been the occasion of my flight. Her excuses were couched in such flattering terms, as to convert her very oversight into an obligation. As rest was desirable for me after my journey, she conducted me into the saloon, where we sat down together. She wore an undress gown of white taffety with black stripes, and a little hat of the same materials with black feathers; which gave me reason to suppose that she might be a widow. But she looked so young, that I scarcely knew what to think of it.

If I was all impatient to get at her history, she was not less so to know who I was. She besought me to acquaint her with my name, not doubting, as she kindly expressed it, by my noble air, and still more by the generous pity which had made me enter so warmly into her interests, that I belonged to some considerable family. The question was not a little perplexing. My colour came and went, my agitation was extreme: and I must own that, with less repugnance to the meanness of a falsehood than to the acknowledgment of a disgraceful truth, I answered that I was the son of Baron Steinbach, an officer of the German guard. Tell me, likewise, resumed the lady, why you left Madrid. Before you answer my question I will insure you all my father's credit, as well as that of my brother Don Gaspard. It is the least mark of gratitude I can bestow on a gentleman who, for my service, has neglected the preservation even of his own life. Without further hesitation, I acquainted her with all the circumstances of my rencounter: she laid the whole blame on my deceased antagonist, and engaged to interest all her family in my favour.

When I had satisfied her curiosity, it seemed not unreasonable to plead in favour of my own. I inquired whether she was maid, wife, or widow. It is three years, answered she, since my father made me marry Don Diego de Lara; and I have been a widow these fifteen months. Madam, said I, by what misfortune were your wedded joys so soon interrupted? I am going to inform you, sir, resumed the lady, in return for the confidence you have reposed in me.

Don Diego de Lara was a very elegant and accomplished gentleman: but, though his affection for me was extreme, and every day was witness to some attempt at giving me pleasure, such as the most impassioned and most tender lover puts in practice to win the smile of her he loves; though he had a thousand estimable qualities, my heart was untouched by all his merit. Love is not always the offspring either of assiduity or desert. Alas! we are often captivated at first sight by we know not whom, nor why, nor how. To love, then, was not in my power. More disconcerted than gratified by his repeated offices of tenderness, which I received with a forced courtesy, but without real pleasure, if I accused myself in secret of ingratitude, I still thought myself an object as much of pity as of censure. To his unhappiness and my own, his delicacy more than kept pace with his affection. Not an action or speech of mine, but he unravelled all its hidden motives, and fathomed all my thoughts, almost before they arose. The inmost recesses of my heart were laid open to his penetration. He complained without ceasing of my indifference; and esteemed himself only so much the more unfortunate, in not being able to please me, as he was well assured that no rival stood in his way; for I was scarcely sixteen years old; and, before he paid his addresses to me, he had tampered with my women, who had assured him that no one had hitherto attracted my attention. Yes, Seraphina, he would often say, I could have been contented that you had preferred some other to myself, and that there were no more fatal cause of your insensibility. My attentions and your own principles would get the better of such a juvenile prepossession; but I despair of triumphing over your coldness, since your heart is impenetrable to all the love I have lavished on you. Wearied with the repetition of the same strain, I told him that instead of disturbing his repose and mine by this excess of delicacy, he would do better in trusting to the effects of time. In fact, at my age, I could not be expected to enter into the refinements of so sentimental a passion; and Don Diego should have waited, as I warned him, for a riper period and more staid reflection. But, finding that a whole year had elapsed, and that he was no forwarder in my favour than on the first day, he lost all patience, or rather, his brain became distracted. Affecting to have important business

at court, he took his leave, and went to serve as a volunteer in the Low Countries; where he soon found in the chances of war what he went to seek, the terminations of his sufferings and of his life.

After the lady had finished her recital, her husband's uncommon character became the topic of our discourse. We were interrupted by the arrival of a courier, charged with a letter for Seraphina from the Count de Polan. She begged my permission to read it; and as she went on, I observed her to grow pale, and to become dreadfully agitated. When she had finished, she raised her eyes upward, heaved a long sigh, and her face was in a moment bathed with her tears. Her sorrow sat heavily on my feelings. My spirits were greatly disturbed; and, as if it were a forewarning of the blow impending over my head, a death-like shudder crept through my frame, and my faculties were all benumbed. Madam, said I, in accents half choked with apprehension, may I ask of what dire events that letter brings the tidings? Take it, sir, answered Seraphina most dolefully, while she held out the letter to me. Read for yourself what my father has written. Alas! you are but too deeply concerned in the contents.

At these words, which made my blood run cold, I took the letter with a trembling hand, and found in it the following intelligence: "Your brother, Don Gaspard, fought yesterday at the Prado. He received a small sword wound, of which he died this day: and declared, before he breathed his last, that his antagonist was the son of Baron Steinbach, an officer of the German guard. As misfortunes never come alone, the murderer has eluded my vengeance by flight, but wherever he may have concealed himself, no pains shall be spared to hunt him out. I am going to write to the magistrates all round the country, who will not fail to take him into custody, if he passes through any one of the towns in their jurisdiction, and by the notices I am going to circulate, I hope to cut off his retreat in the country or at the sea-ports. THE COUNT DE POLAN."

Conceive into what a ferment this letter threw all my thoughts. I remained for some moments motionless and without the power of speech. In the midst of my confusion, I too plainly saw the destructive bearing of Don Gaspard's death on the passion I had imbibed. My de-

spair was unbounded at the thought. I threw myself at Seraphina's feet, and offering her my naked sword, Madam, said I, spare the Count de Polan the necessity of seeking further for a man who might possibly withdraw himself from his resentment. Be yourself the avenger of your brother: offer up his murderer as the victim of your own hand: now, strike the blow. Let this very weapon which terminated his life, cut short the sad remnant of his adversary's days. Sir, answered Seraphina, a little softened by my behaviour, I loved Don Gaspard, so that though you killed him in fair and manly hostility, and though he brought his death upon himself, you may rest assured that I take up my father's quarrel. Yes, Don Alphonso, I am your decided enemy, and will do against you all that the ties of blood and friendship require at my hands. But I will not take advantage of your evil star: in vain has it delivered you into my grasp: if honour arms me against you, the same sentiment forbids to pursue a cowardly revenge. The rights of hospitality must be inviolable, and I will not repay such service as you have rendered me with the treachery of an assassin. Fly! make your escape, if you can, from our pursuit and from the rigour of the laws, and save your forfeit life from the dangers that beset it.

What, then! madam, returned I, when vengeance is in your own hands, do you turn it over to the laws, which may, perhaps, be too slow for your impatience? Nay! rather stab a wretch who is not worthy of your forbearance. No, madam, maintain not so noble and so generous a proceeding with one like me. Do you know who I am? All Madrid takes me for Baron Steinbach's son—yet am I nothing better than a foundling, whom he brought up from charity. I know not even who were guilty of my existence. No matter, interrupted Seraphina, with precipitation, as if my last words had given her new uneasiness, though you were the lowest of mankind I would do what honour bids. Well, madam, said I, since a brother's death is insufficient to excite your thirst after my blood, I will exasperate your hatred still further by a new offence, of which I trust you will never pardon the boldness. I dote on you: I could not behold your charms without being dazzled by them: and, in spite of the cloud in which my destiny was enveloped, I had cherished the hope of being united to you. I was so

infatuated by my passion, or rather by my pride, as to flatter myself that heaven, which perhaps conceals from me my birth in mercy, might discover it one day, and enable me without a blush to acquaint you with my real name. After this injurious avowal, can you hesitate a moment about punishing me?

This rash declaration, replied the lady, would doubtless prove offensive at any other season; but I forgive it in consideration of the trouble which bewilders you. Besides, my own condition so engrosses me, as to render me deaf to any strange ideas that may escape you. Once more, Don Alphonso, added she, shedding tears, begone far from a house which you have cast into mourning: every moment of your longer stay adds pungency to my distress. I no longer oppose your will, madam, returned I, preparing to take my leave: absence from you must then be my portion: but do not suppose that, anxious for the preservation of a life which is become hateful to you, I go to seek an asylum where I may be sheltered from your search. No, no, I bare my breast to your resentment. I shall wait with impatience at Toledo for the fate which you design me; and by surrendering at once to my pursuers, shall myself forward the completion of my miseries.

At the conclusion of this speech I withdrew. My horse was returned to me, and I went to Toledo, where I abode eight days, and really with so little care to conceal myself that I know not how or why I have escaped an arrest; for I cannot suppose that the Count de Polan, whose whole soul is set on cutting off my retreat, should not have been aware that I was likely to pass through Toledo. Yesterday I left that town, where it should seem as if I was tired of my liberty, and without betaking myself to any fixed course of travelling, I came to this hermitage, like a man who had no reason to be ashamed of showing himself. Such, father, was the cause of my absence and distraction. I beseech you to assist me with your counsels.

CHAPTER XI

THE OLD HERMIT TURNS OUT AN EXTRAORDINARY GENIUS, AND GIL BLAS FINDS HIMSELF AMONG HIS FORMER ACQUAINTANCE

When Don Alphonso had concluded the melancholy recital of his misfortunes, the old hermit said to him—My son, you have been excessively rash in tarrying so long at Toledo. I consider in a very different light from that you affect to place it in, what you have told me of your story; and your love for Seraphina seems to me to be sheer madness. Take my word for it, you will do well to cancel that young lady from your remembrance; she never can be of your communion. Retreat like a skilful general, when you cannot act with effect on the offensive; and pursue your fortune on another field, where success may smile on your endeavours. You will be terribly out of luck to kill the brother of the next young lady who may chance to succeed this only possible object of your affection.

He was going to add many other inducements to resignation, in such a case as Don Alphonso's, when we saw another hermit enter our retreat, with a well-stuffed wallet slung across his shoulders. He was on his return, with the charitable contributions of all the good folks in the town of Cuença; and the gathering did credit to the religion of the age. He looked younger than his companion, in spite of his thick, foxy beard. Welcome home, brother Antony, said the elder of the two recluses; what news do you bring us from town? Bad enough, answered the carroty friar, putting into his hands a paper, folded in the form of a letter; this little instrument will inform you. The hoary sage opened it, and after reading on with an increased attention, as the contents seemed to grow more interesting, exclaimed: Heaven's will be done! Since the combustion is anticipated, we have only to fall in with the humour of our fate. Let us change our dialect, Signor Don Alphonso! pursued he, addressing his discourse to my young companion: you behold in me a man, like yourself, who has been a broad mark for the wantonness of fortune to take aim at. Word is

sent me from Cuença, a town at the distance of a league hence, that some backbiter has been blackening my fair fame in the esteem of justice; who is coming with her hue and cry to disturb the repose of these rural scenes, and to lay her paw upon my person. But an old fox is too cunning to be caught in a trap. This is not the first time that I have cut and run before the bloodhounds of the law. But, thanks to myself for having my wits about me, I have always ended the chase in a whole skin, and held myself in readiness for another. It is now time to assume another form; for, whether you like me best in my old skin or my new, I cast my hermit's decrepit slough, to bask in the sunshine of youth and vigour.

To suit the action to the word, he threw off the incumbrance of his ecclesiastical petticoat, and stood forth to view in a doublet of black serge with slashed sleeves. Then off went his cap, and snap went a string, which supported the hoary honours of a beard, and our anchorite was at once transformed to a brawny ruffian of eight-and-twenty or thirty. Brother Antony, following a good example, discarded the outward show of religion, treated his fiery beard as the snowy one had been handled just before, and pulled out of an old worm-eaten trunk a sorry rag of a cassock, with which he invested his person. But what words can express my surprise, when Signor Don Raphael presented himself to my view, like a phœnix from the ashes of the old bead-counter! To complete the trick of the pantomime, brother Antony was turned into my faithful vassal and trusty squire, Ambrose de Lamela. Here are miracles! exclaimed I in a quandary; as far as I can perceive, we are all hail fellow well met! You never were more lucky in your life, Signor Gil Blas, said Don Raphael, with a brazenfaced good humour: you have fallen among old friends when you least expected it. It must be owned you have a crow to pluck with us; but let the past be buried in oblivion, and thank heaven, here we are together again. Ambrose and I will serve under your banner; and let me tell you, you will have subalterns of no contemptible prowess. You may object to our morals; but they are better in the main than many a hypocrite's pretensions. We never assassinate, and rarely maltreat: and that in pure self-defence. The only liberty we take with society is to live at free quarters:

and though robbery may be considered as containing some little spice of injustice, the necessity we labour under of committing it restores its equilibrium to the scale. Even join your fortune with ours: you will lead a life of hazard, but of variety. Our predatory peregrinations have every pastoral beauty except innocence, and the want of that is more than counterpoised by subtlety and strategem. Not but, with all our forecast, a certain mechanical concatenation of second causes sometimes frustrates our best-concerted projects, and drags our philosophy through the mire. But a ducking now and then only makes us swim the better. The seasons must all be taken in their turns; the blanks as well as the prizes must be drawn in the cheating lottery of life.

Courteous stranger, pursued the pretended hermit, speaking to Don Alphonso, we extend the proposal of partnership to you, and it may be a question whether you will better yourself by rejecting it, in the lamentable condition of your affairs; for, to say nothing of the chance-medley for which you are at hide and seek, your fortune is probably a little out at elbows. Most lamentably so, said Don Alphonso; and hence, since the truth must out, are my forebodings more dark than even my present evils. That is the very thing! replied Don Raphael. You were sent by our better genius to join the party. You will find no such good berth in the honest part of the world. Your wants will all be supplied, and you may laugh at the vigilance of your pursuers. There is not a corner in all Spain which we have not ferreted out; those who are always on the scamper see a great deal of the country. We are perfect connoisseurs in landscape, and affect Salvator Rosa's rugged scenery. There we graze in peace and freedom, secure from the brutality of justice. Don Alphonso expressed himself very much obliged to them for their kind invitation; and finding neither money in his purse, nor contrivance to procure it in his pericranium, made up his mind at once not to stand upon punctilio with morality. I too was led into a looser course than agreed with my rigid principles, by a growing friendship for this young man, whom I could not find in my heart to abandon in so perilous an enterprise.

We all four agreed to set off in a body, and never to part company. The question was put whether we should sound

a retreat on the instant, or first give a peremptory summons to a flagon of excellent wine, which brother Antony had invested by regular approaches at Cuença the day before; but Raphael, a more experienced general than any of us, represented that the first thing to be done was to render our own camp impregnable, for which purpose he proposed that we should march all night, to gain a very thick wood between Villardesa and Almodabar, where we should halt, as in a friendly country, and recruit after the fatigues of the campaign. These general orders were approved of in council. Our lay hermits then went about packing up their baggage and provisions, which were swung in two bundles across the back of Don Alphonso's horse. We were not long in our preparations, after which we sheered off from the hermitage, leaving a rich booty to legal rapine in the saintly paraphernalia of the two hermits; including a white beard and a red one, two rickety bedsteads, a table without a leg, a chest without a bottom, two chairs without any seats, and an unmutilated image of St Pacomo.

Our march was continued the whole night, and we began to chafe and feel other inconveniences, when at daybreak we hailed the wood where our toils were to end. Sailors after a long voyage work the ship with double alacrity at sight of their native land. So it was with us, we pushed forward and got to our journey's end by sunrise. Dashing into the thickest of the wood, we pitched upon a retired and pleasant spot, where the turf was circled in by tall and branching oaks, whose gigantic limbs, interwoven over our heads, formed a natural vault, not to be penetrated even by noon-day heat. We took the bridle off the horse to let him feed after he was unloaded. Then down we sat, pulling out of brother Antony's wallet some large pieces of bread and good substantial slices of roast meat, at which we began pegging with all possible pertinacity. Nevertheless, let our appetites be as obstinate as they might, we every now and then suspended the fray to spar a little with the flagon, which returned our blows till it made us reel again.

About the end of the conflict, Don Raphael said to Don Alphonso—My brave comrade, after the confidence you have reposed in me, it is but fair that in my turn I should recount the history of my life to you with the same sincerity. You will do me a great favour, answered the

young man, and an equal one to me, chimed in I. My curiosity is all alive to know your adventures, for doubtless they must afford much matter of useful speculation. You may rest assured of that, replied Don Raphael; and I mean to leave behind me a history of my own times. The composition shall be the amusement of my old age, for I am as yet in the prime of life, and mean to furnish in propriâ personâ many new hints for my commonplace-book. But we are all weary, let us recruit with some hours of sleep. While we three lie down, Ambrose shall keep watch for fear of a surprise, and shall then take a nap in his turn. For though, to all appearance, we are here in perfect safety, it is always good to keep a sentry at the outposts. After this precaution he stretched himself along upon the grass. Don Alphonso did the same. I followed their example, and Lamela performed the office of a scout.

Don Alphonso, so far from getting any rest, was incessantly brooding over his misfortunes, and I could not get a wink of sleep. As for Don Raphael, he snored most sonorously. But he awoke in little more than an hour, when, finding us in a listening mood, he said to Lamela—My friend Ambrose, you may now yield to the gentle influence of Morpheus. No, no, answered Lamela, my sleepy fit is over; and though I know all the passages of your life by rote, they are so instructive to the practitioners of our art and mystery, that I do not care how often I hear the tale over again. Without further preface, Don Raphael began the narrative of his adventures in these terms.

BOOK THE FIFTH

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF DON RAPHAEL

I MADE my entrance on the stage of life at Madrid, where my mother was an actress, famous for dramatic, and infamous for her intriguing talents. Her name was Lucinda. As for my father, every man must have one; but my arithmetic is too scanty to determine the number of mine. It

might indeed be a matter of history, that such or such a man of fashion was dangling after my mother at the epoch of my arrival in this system; but then, that mere fact would by no means warrant a deduction that any individual gallant of the mother must therefore be the father of the child. A lady, so eminent as she was in so notorious and wholesale a profession, must have many strings to her bow; where her blandishments are most publicly lavished, her favours are most sparingly bestowed: there is a show article or two for public exhibition, but her everyday wares are cheap, and hackneyed to the meanest purchaser.

There is nothing like taking scandal by the beard, and treating the opinion of the world with heroic indifference. Lucinda, instead of cooping me up in a garret at home, made no scruple about owning her little bastard, but took me in her hand to the theatre with a modest assurance, regardless how the tongue of rumour might babble at her expense, or how the laugh of malice might peal at my unlucky appearance. In short, I was her pet, and came in for the caresses of all the men who frequented the house. One would have sworn that nature pleaded in my favour, and inspired each of them with a father's pride in the brat they had clubbed for. The twelve first years of my life were suffered to waste away in all kinds of frivolous amusements. Scarcely did they teach me to read and write. Still less was it thought of any consequence to initiate me in the principles of my religion. To dance, to sing, to play on the guitar, was the sum total of my early attainments. With these gifts and graces for my only acquisitions, the Marquis of Leganez asked for me to be about his only son, who was nearly of my own age. Lucinda gave her consent without reluctance, and it was then that I began to mind a little what I was about. Young Leganez could not reproach me with my ignorance, his little lordship was not cast in a scientific mould, for he scarcely knew a letter of his alphabet, though he had been under private tuition for fifteen months. None of his masters could make anything of him, patience was never formed to engage in so unequal a match. To be sure, they were expressly forbid to exercise any severity on his noble carcase, their orders were to teach, not to torture him; and this tender precaution, acting on a subject of insufferably

untoward dispositions, was the means of throwing to the dogs all the mental physic they poured in; he would none of it.

But the verb-grinder engendered in his noddle a most ingenious device, by which to keep this troublesome young lordling in awe, without trenching on his foolish father's injunctions. This scheme was no other than to flog me whenever that scape-grace Leganez had incurred the penalty of the rod, and this vicarious execution was inflicted with the utmost rigour. My consent to the transfer had never been asked, and there was nothing in the act itself to recommend it; so that my only chance was to run away, and appeal to my mother against so arbitrary a discipline. However her maternal feelings might inwardly revolt, no trace of woman's weakness could be detected in her manner of receiving my complaint. The Leganez connection was too important to be lost for a few whippings; and away went she, dragging her culprit into the presence of his tormentor, who by this act of hers became master of broom field. Experience had convinced him that the success of his invention corresponded with its felicity. He therefore went on improving the mind and manners of the little grandee at the expense of my skin. Remorse for his delinquencies was to be excited only by sympathy; so that whenever it became necessary to make a bloody example, my seat of vengeance was firked most unmercifully. The running account between young Leganez and me was all on one side, and scarcely a day passed but he sinned on tick and suffered by attorney. By the nearest calculation of whole numbers, there went somewhere about a hundred cuts to teach him each single letter of the alphabet; so that if you multiply 100 by 24 for stupidity, and add an 0 to the amount for moral offences, you will have the sum total of the belabouring that his education cost me.

This thick and threefold companionship with birch was not the only rub; my path through this family was more beset with thorns than sweetened by flowers. As my birth and connections were no secret, the whole of the establishment, to the very refuse of the household, the stable-boys and scullions, twitted me with my shameful origin. This stuck so terribly in my throat that I made my escape once more, but not without borrowing my tutor's ready money,

amounting to upwards of a hundred and fifty ducats, for an indefinite period, and without interest. Thus was the account settled between us, since he had made a property of my hide for a scarecrow, it was but fair that I should have a finger in the earnings of his arm. For a first attempt at thieving both the plan and execution were hopeful. A hue and cry was raised for two days, it was hot while it lasted, but I lay snug, and they missed me. Madrid was no longer a fit hiding-place, so I took to cover in Toledo, and the hounds were thrown out.

I was just then entering into my fifteenth year. What a happy fellow, at such an early age, to shape my own conduct and be in a condition of forming a set of morals for myself! I soon scraped acquaintance with some pleasant youths, who rescued me from the dominion of prejudice, and shared liberally with me in the sin of spending what was not my own. By degrees I rose in society and leagued myself with a set of professional sharpers, who found me so fine a subject to work upon, that a short time, with plenty of practice, put me in possession of all the most desperate jobs. At the expiration of five years, an itch for travelling laid hold of me. I therefore took leave of my comrades and got as far as Alcantara, wishing to commence my peregrinations with the province of Estremadura. In this my first excursion, an opportunity of keeping in my hand occurred; and I was too diligent a practitioner to let it escape. As I was on foot, and loaded moreover with a pretty heavy knapsack, I halted from time to time to avail myself of the shade, and recruit a little under the trees which lined the highway. At one of these baits I picked up two young gentlemen, who were chatting at their ease upon the grass, and inhaling the freshness of the breeze. My mode of accosting them was suited to the occasion; nor did its familiarity seem to be taken in ill part. The eldest could not be more than fifteen—a couple of as practicable greenhorns as ever fell into the hands of a man of genius. Courteous stranger, said the youngest, we are the sons of two rich citizens at Placentia. Longing extremely to see the kingdom of Portugal, we have each of us begged a hundred pistoles from our friends, and are setting out to satisfy our curiosity. Travelling on foot as we do, we shall be able to get a good way with that supply,

shall we not? What do you think of it? If I had as much, answered I, they might take me who could catch me. I would scour over the four known quarters of the globe, and then set out on new discoveries. Fire and fury! Two hundred pistoles! Why it is an entail for a dukedom! You ought to lay by out of the interest. If it is agreeable to you, gentlemen, I will club with you as far as Almeria, whither I am going to take possession of an estate left me by an uncle who was settled there for twenty years or upwards.

My young cockneys testified at once the pleasure they should derive from my company. Whereupon, when we were all three a little refreshed, we trudged on towards Alcantara, where we arrived early in the afternoon. No inn but the best was fit to hold such guests. We asked for a room, and were shown into one where there was a press with a good strong lock upon it. Supper was ordered without delay; but as some time was required to get it ready, I proposed to my travelling companions a gentle saunter about the town. The party seemed perfectly agreeable. We locked up our knapsacks in the press, the key of which one of the citizens put in his pocket, and out sallied we from the inn. The churches were the best lions we met with in our way; and while we were gaping about the principal, I pretended to have recollected on a sudden some very urgent business. Gentlemen, said I to my companions, it has just come across me that a good man of Toledo gave me a commission to say two words on his behalf to a merchant who lives hard by this church. Have the goodness to wait for me here, I will be back in a moment. With this excuse, I went off like a shot, in the direction of our inn. The press was my point of attack—I forced the lock, ransacked the baggage of my young citizens, and laid a sacrilegious hand on their pistoles. Poor youths! How they were to pay their reckoning, it was not for me to presume even to guess, for most assuredly I stripped them of all the natural means. After this feat, I decamped as expeditiously as my legs could carry me from the town, and took the direction of Merida, without caring a curse what became of the young brood I had plucked.

Such a windfall as this placed me in a condition of travelling merrily. Though in the very blush of youth, a cer-

tain forecast was not wanting to carry me discreetly through the world, and keep my head above water. It must be admitted without question, that I was a youth of forward parts for my age, and unfettered by the prejudices of innocence. I determined to buy a mule, and cheapened one at the first market town. My knapsack was metamorphosed into a portmanteau, and by degrees I began to put on the man of consequence. On the third day a man came across me singing vespers with lungs like a pair of bellows on the highway. By his air, he seemed to be a musician of the church establishment, and I accosted him accordingly. Well done, my holy howler of the hallelujahs! You sing your penitential ditties at a good jovial pitch. To all appearance you sol-fa with your whole heart and soul. Good sir, replied he, I belong, with your good leave, to the musical department of the Catholic church: and it is my common practice to keep my devotion and my wind in play by the rehearsal of an anthem or two as I travel along the road.

With this disposition to be sociable, we soon got into conversation. It was clear to me that I had fallen in with a character not to be despised in point of shrewdness, nor indisposed to society and merriment. He was four or five-and-twenty. My companion being on foot, I slackened my pace, for the pleasure of chatting with him. Among other things, we talked about Toledo. I am perfectly well acquainted with that city, said the brazen-lunged torturer of anthems. It was my residence for a considerable time, and my connections there are not altogether contemptible. And in what part of the town, interrupted I, did you reside? In the New Street, was his answer. I was hand in glove with Don Vincent de Buena Garra, Don Matthias de Cordello, and two or three other gentlemen of very considerable fashion. We lived together; took our meals at the same mess, and, in short, were scarcely ever asunder. It was a charming society! This avowal was no small surprise to me, for it is to be understood, that the gentlemen whose names he cited with so pompous an air were the very sharpers with whom I had been affiliated at Toledo. Why, thou degenerate vicar choral! exclaimed I, these fine blades of whom thou hast been boasting are among the number of my acquaintance

also, for I too have lived with them in the New Street; we were hand in glove, took our meals at the same mess, and, in short, were scarcely ever asunder. You are a wag! replied he, with a knowing wink, that is to say, you got into the gang three years ago, when I left it. My motive for quitting such a worshipful fraternity, resumed I, was an itch for travelling. I mean to make the tour of Spain. A little more knowledge of the world will make me quite another thing. Doubtless, said he, there is no possible way but travelling to rub off the rust, or bring wit, talent, and address to perfection. It is for the self-same reason that I too turned my back upon Toledo, though the time glided away there very agreeably. But thanks to a kind providence, which has yoked we with a labourer in my own vineyard, when I least expected it. Let us join our forces, let us travel the same road, let us make a joint-stock out of our neighbours' purses, let us rob, let us cheat, let us avail ourselves of every opportunity that may offer of exemplifying our theory, and improving our practice, in the noble art on which our skill is employed.

The proposal was made in so candid a spirit, so like a citizen of the world, untainted with the selfishness of your honest men, that I closed in with it at once. My confidence was surrendered at the first summons to the frankness with which he volunteered his own. We spoke our free hearts each to the other. I dilated all my pilgrimage, and he spake of most disastrous chances, of moving accidents through which he had passed even from his boyish days to this very moment of his ripe and rampant roguery. It appeared that he was on his way from Portalegre, whence he had been obliged to decamp with the utmost expedition on account of a little swindling transaction in which his luck happened not to keep pace with his ingenuity. The habit he wore was sacrilegiously adopted as a cloak to his person and real character, since he thought it safest to be near the church, however far from God. Thus did we two share all our counsel, and pledge our brother's vows, till we grew together like a double cherry, and determined, with two seeming bodies but one heart, to incorporate our voices and minds in some master-stroke at Merida. If it took, well and good; if not, we had only to cut and run. From this moment, community of goods, that pure and

simple feature of patriarchal life, was enacted as a law between us. Moralez, it is true, for that was my fellow-traveller's name, did not find himself in the most splendid condition possible. His funds were limited to five or six ducats, with a few little articles in a bag. I therefore was the monied man of the firm; but then there was brass in his forehead for an inexhaustible coinage, and the seeming of a saint when he played the devil most. So on we journeyed on the ride-and-tie principle, and arrived in humble cavalcade at Merida.

We put up at an inn near the skirts of the town, where my comrade changed his dress. When he had rigged himself in layman's attire, we took a turn up and down, to reconnoitre the ground, and see if we could pick out some opportunity of labouring in our vocation. Had it been our good fortune to have lived before Homer, that old apologist for sharping by wholesale would have dignified our excursion with a simile.

> Not half so keen, fierce vultures of the chase
> Stoop from the mountains on the feathered race, etc.

To descend into plain prose, we were ruminating on the chapter of accidents, and hammering out some theme for the employment of our industry, when we espied a grey-headed old gentleman in the street, sword in hand, defending himself against three men who were thrusting at him with all their might and main. The unfairness of the match was what stuck in my throat; so that flying, with the spirit of a prize-fighter, to see fair play, I made common cause with the old man. Moralez followed up my blows. We proved ourselves a match for the three assailants, and put them completely to the rout.

Our rescued friend was profuse in his acknowledgments. We are in rapture, said I, at our good luck in being here so seasonably for your assistance: but let us at least know to whom we have been so fortunate as to be serviceable; and what inducement those three men could possibly have for their murderous attempt. Gentlemen, replied he, my obligations are too great to hesitate about satisfying your curiosity; my name is Jerome de Moyadas, a gentleman of this town, living on my means. One of these cut-throat

rascals, from whom you have rescued me, professes to be in love with my daughter. He asked her of me in marriage within these few days; and for want of gaining my consent in a quiet way, has just attempted to force himself into my daughter's good graces, by sending me into the other world. And may we take the liberty, rejoined I, of inquiring further, why you were so obdurate to the proposals of this enamoured swain? I will explain the whole to you at once, said he. I had a brother, a merchant in this town; his name was Austin. Two months ago he happened to be at Calatrava, and took up his abode with his correspondent, Juan Velez de la Membrilla. They got to be as loving as turtles; and my brother, to clench the connection, engaged my daughter Florence to his good friend's son, not doubting but he had influence enough with me to redeem his pledge when he returned to Merida. Accordingly, he no sooner opened himself on the subject than I consented out of pure fraternal affection. He sent Florence's picture to Calatrava; but, alas! he did not live to put the finishing hand to his own work. We laid him with his forefathers three weeks ago! On his death-bed, he besought me not to dispose of my girl but in favour of his correspondent's son. I satisfied his mind on that point; and this is the reason why I have refused Florence to the suitor by whom I was assaulted, though the match would have been a very desirable one. But my word is my idol; and we are in daily expectation of Juan Velez de la Membrilla's heir, who is to be my son-in-law, though I know no more of him, nor of his father neither, than if they were just imported from an undiscovered island. But I beg pardon; this is an old man's garrulity. Yet you yourselves led me into the scrape.

This tale did I swallow with a greedy ear; and pouncing at once upon a part to play, which my fruitful imagination suggested, I put on an air of inordinate surprise, and ventured at all hazards to lift my eyes upward to a purer region. Then turning to my father-in-law, with an expression of feeling which nothing but hypocrisy could personate: Ah! Signor de Moyadas, is it possible that, on my arrival at Merida, I should enjoy the heartfelt triumph of rescuing from foul assassination the honoured parent of my peerless love? This exclamation produced all the astonishment it

was levelled to excite in the old citizen. Even Moralez himself stared like an honest man, and shewed by his face that there was a degree of impudence to which his conceptions had not hitherto risen. What! do not my ears deceive me? exclaimed the old gentleman. And are you really the son of my brother's correspondent? Really and truly, Signor Jerome de Moyadas, rejoined I with impregnable effrontery, and a hug round his neck that had nearly sent him after his brother. Behold the selected mortal of his species, to whose arms the adorable Florence is devoted! But these nuptial anticipations, transporting as they are, must yield to the anguish of my soul for the demise of their founder. Poor Austin! He is gone, and we must all follow! I should be ingratitude personified, if my heart was not lacerated and rent by the death of a man to whom I owe all my hopes of bliss. At the term of this period, I squeezed good Jerome's wezand once more, and drew the back of my hand across my eyes, to wipe away the tears it had not been convenient to shed. Moralez, who by this time had conned over the pretty pickings to be made out of this juggle, was not wanting to play his underpart. He passed himself off for my servant, and improved upon his master in lamentation for the untimely death of Signor Austin. My honoured master Jerome, exclaimed he, what a loss have you sustained, since your brother is no more! He was such an honest man. Honest men are not to be met with every day. A superfine sample of commerce! A dealer in friendship without a per centage! A dealer in merchandise without an underhand advantage! A dealer who dealt as dealers very seldom do deal!

We had our hands to play against a man who was a novice at the game. Simple and cullible, so far from smelling out the rat, he took his stink for a nosegay. And why, said he, did you not come straight to my house? It was not friendly to put up at an inn. On the footing we are likely to be upon, there should be none of those punctilios. Sir, said Moralez, helping me out of the scrape, my master is a little too much given to stand upon ceremony. Though to be sure, in the present instance, he is in some degree excusable for declining to appear before in this uncouth trim. We have been robbed upon the road, and have lost all our travelling equipage. My lad, interrupted I, has let the

cat out of the bag, Signor de Moyadas. This unlucky accident has prevented me from paying my respects sooner True love is diffident; nor could I venture in this garb into the presence of a mistress who was unacquainted with my person. I was therefore waiting the return of a servant whom I have sent to Calatrava. Such a trifle, rejoined the old man, must not deprive us of your company; and I insist upon it, that you make my house your home from this very moment.

With such sort of importunity, he forced me into his family: but as we were on our way, the pretended robbery was a natural topic of conversation; and I should have made light of my baggage, though the loss was very considerable, had not Florence's picture unluckily formed a part of the booty! The old codger chuckled at that, and observed, that such a loss was easily repaired: the original was worth five hundred per cent. more than the copy. To make me amends, as soon as we got home, he called his daughter, a girl of not more than sixteen, with a person to have reclaimed a libertine, if beauty ever possessed that power except in romance. You behold, said he, the bale of goods my late brother has consigned to you. Oh! my good sir, exclaimed I in an impassioned tone, words are not wanting to assure me that this must be the lovely Florence: those bewitching features are engraven on my memory, their impression is indelible on my heart. If the portrait I have lost, the mere outline of these embodied charms, could kindle passion by its cold and lifeless likeness, judge what must be my agitation, my transport at this moment. Such language is too flattering to be sincere, said Florence; nor am I so weak and vain as to be persuaded that my merits warrant it. That is right! interchange your fine speeches, my children! This was a good-natured encouragement from the father, who at once left me alone with his daughter, and taking Moralez aside, said to him: My friend, those who made so free with your baggage, doubtless did not stand upon any ceremony with your money. Very true, sir, answered my colleague; an overpowering band of robbers poured down upon us near Castil-Blazo, and left us not a rag but what we carry on our backs: but we are in momentary expectation of receiving bills of exchange, and then we shall appear once more like ourselves.

While you are waiting for your bills of exchange, replied the old man, taking a purse out of his pocket, here are a hundred pistoles with which you may do as you please. Oh, sir! rejoined Moralez, as if he were shocked, my master will never take them. You do not know him. Heaven and earth! he is a man of the nicest scruples in money matters. Not one of your shabby fellows, always spunging upon his friends, and ready to take up money wherever he can get it! Running in debt is ratsbane to him. If he is to beg his bread or go into an hospital, why there is an end of it! but as for borrowing, he will never be reduced to that. So much the better! said the good burgess: I value him the more for his independence. Running in debt is a mean thing; it ought to be ratsbane to him and everybody else. Your people of quality, to be sure, may plead prescription in their favour; there is a sort of privileged swindling, not incompatible with high honour, in high life. If tradesmen were to be paid, they would be too nearly on a evel with their employers. But as your master has such upright principles, heaven forbid they should be violated in this house! Since any offer of pecuniary assistance would hurt his feelings, we must say no more about it. As the point seemed to be settled, the purse was for steering its course back again into the pocket; but my provident partner laid hold of Signor de Moyadas by the arm, and delayed the convoy. Stay, sir, said he, whatever aversion my master may have to borrowing on a general principle, and considered as borrowing, yet there is a light in which, with good management, he may be brought to look kindly on your hundred pistoles. In fact, it is only in a mercantile point of view, as an affair of debtor and creditor between strangers, that he holds this formal doctrine; but he is free and easy enough where he is on a family footing. Why, there is his own father! It is only ask and have; and he does ask and have accordingly. Now you are going to be a second father to him, and are fairly entitled to be put on the same confidential footing. He is a young man of nice discrimination, and will doubtless think you entitled to the compliment.

By thus shifting his ground, Moralez got possession of the old gentleman's purse. As for the girl and myself, we were engaged in a little agreeable flirting; but were soon

joined by our honoured parent, who interrupted our tête-à-tête. He told Florence how much he was obliged to me, and expressed his gratitude to myself, in terms which left no doubt of our being a very happy family. I made the most of so favourable a disposition, by telling the good man, that if he would bestow on me an acknowledgment the nearest to my heart, he must hasten my marriage with his daughter. My eagerness was not taken amiss. He assured me, that in three days at latest I should be a happy bridegroom, and that instead of six thousand ducats, the fortune he had promised to give my wife, he would make it up ten, as a substantial proof how deeply he felt himself indebted to me for the service I had rendered him.

Here we were, therefore, quite at home with our good friend Jerome de Moyadas, sumptuously entertained, and catching every now and then a vista vision of ten thousand ducats, with which we proposed to march off abruptly from Merida. Our transports, however, were not without their alloy. It was by no means improbable that within three days the bonâ fide son of Juan Velez de la Membrilla might come and interrupt our sport. This fear had for its foundation more than the weakness of our nerves. On the very next morning, a sort of clodpole, with a portmanteau across his shoulders, knocked at the door of Florence's father. I was not at home at the time, but my colleague had to bear the brunt of it. Sir, said the rustic to our sagacious friend, I belong to the young gentleman at Calatrava who is to be your son-in-law—to Signor de la Membrilla. We have both just come off our journey: he will be here in an instant, and sent me forward to prepare you for his arrival. Hardly had these unaccountable tidings been announced, when the master appeared in person; which stretched the old fellow's blinkers into a stare, and put Moralez a little to the blush.

Young Pedro was what we call a tall fellow of his inches. He began at once paying his compliments to the master of the house; but the good man did not give him time to finish his speech; and turning towards my partner in iniquity, asked what was the meaning of all this. Hereupon Moralez, whose power of face was not to be exceeded by any human impudence, boldly asserted our identity, and said to the old gentleman—Sir, these two men here before you belong

to the gang which pillaged us on the highway. I have a perfect recollection of their features; and in particular could swear to him who has the effrontery to call himself the son of Signor Juan Velez de la Membrilla. The old citizen gulped down the lies of Moralez like nectar, and told the intruders, on the supposition of their being the impostors—Gentlemen, you are come the day after the fair; the trick was a very good one, but it will not pass; the enemy has taken the ground before you. Pedro de la Membrilla has been under this roof since yesterday. Have all your wits about you, answered the young man from Calatrava; you are nursing a viper in your bosom. Be assured that Juan Velez de la Membrilla has neither chick nor child but myself. And what relation is the hangman to you? replied the old dupe: you are better known than liked in this house. Can you look this young man in the face? or can you deny that you robbed his master? If I were anywhere but under your roof, rejoined Pedro in a rage, I would punish the insolence of this scoundrel who fancies to pass me off for a highwayman. He is indebted for his safety to your presence, which puts a curb upon my choler. Good sir, pursued he, you are grossly imposed on. I am the favoured youth to whom your brother Austin has promised your daughter. Is it your pleasure for me to produce the whole correspondence with my father on the subject of the impending match? Will you be satisfied with Florence's picture sent me by him as a present a little while before his death?

No, put in the old burgess crustily; the picture will work just as strongly on my conviction as the letters. I am perfectly aware by what chance they all fell into your hands; and if you will take a stupid fellow's advice, Merida will soon be rid of such rubbish. A quick march may save you a trouncing. This is beyond all bearing, screamed out the young royster with an overwhelming vehemence. My name shall never be stolen from me, and assumed by a common cheat with impunity; neither shall my person be confounded with that of a freebooter. There are those in this town who can identify me: they are forthcoming, and shall expose the fallacy by which you are prejudiced against me. With this assurance he withdrew, attended by his servant, and Moralez kept possession of the field.

The adventure had even the effect of determining Jerome de Moyadas to fix the wedding for the very time being. Accordingly he went his way, for the purpose of giving the necessary orders for the celebration.

Though my colleague in knavery was well enough pleased to see Florence's father in a humour so pat for our purposes, he was not without certain scruples of conscience about our safety. It was to be feared, lest the probable proceedings of Pedro might be followed by awkward consequences; so that he waited impatiently for my arrival, to make me acquainted with what had occurred. I found him over head and ears in a brown study. What is the matter, my friend? said I, seemingly there is something upon your mind. Indeed there is; and something that will be minded, answered he. At the same time he let me into the affair. Now you may judge, added he after a pause, whether we have not some food for reflection. It is your ill star, rash contriver, which has thrown us into this perplexity. The idea, it must be confessed, was full of fire and ingenuity; had it answered in the application, your renown would have been emblazoned in the chronicles of our fraternity; but according to present appearances, the run of luck is against us, and my counsels incline to a prudent avoidance of all explanations, by quietly sneaking off with the market-penny we have made of the silly old fellow's credulity.

Master Moralez, replied I to this desponding speech, you give way to difficulties with more haste than good speed. Such pusillanimity does but little honour to Don Matthias de Cordel, and the other gallant blades with whom you were affiliated at Toledo. After serving a campaign under such experienced generals, it is not soldierly to shrink from the perils of the field. For my part, I am resolved to fight the battles of these heroes over again, or in more vulgar phrase, to prove myself a chip from the old blocks. The precipice which makes your head turn giddy only stiffens my sinews to surmount the tolls of the way, and push forward to the end of our career. If you arrive at your journey's end in a whole skin, said my companion, I will myself be your biographer, and set your fame far above all the parallels of Plutarch.

Just as Moralez was finishing this learned allusion,

Jerome de Moyadas came in. You shall be my son-in-law this very evening, said he. Your servant must have given you an account of what has just passed. What say you to the impudence of the scoundrel who wanted to make me believe that he was the son of my brother's correspondent? Honoured sir, answered I, with a melancholy air, and in a tone of voice the most insinuating that ever cajoled the easy faith of a dotard, I feel within me that it is not in my nature to carry on an imposition without betraying it in my countenance. It now becomes necessary to make you a sincere confession. I am not the son of Juan Velez de la Membrilla. What is it you tell me? interrupted the old man, out of breath with surprise, and out of his wits with apprehension. So then! you are not the young man to whom my brother . . . . For pity's sake, sir, interrupted I in my turn, condescend to give me a hearing patiently to the end of my story. For these eight days have I doted to distraction on your daughter; and this dotage, this distraction, has riveted me to Merida. Yesterday, after having rescued you from your danger, I was making up my mind to ask her of you in marriage; but you gave a check to my passion and put a tie upon my tongue, by the intelligence that she was destined for another. You told me that your brother, on his death-bed, enjoined you to give her to Pedro de la Membrilla; that your word was pledged, and that you were the sworn vassal and bondman of your veracity. These circumstances, it must be owned, were overwhelming in the extreme; and my romantic passion, at the last gasp of its despair, gained breath by the stratagem with which the god of love inspired me. I must at the same time declare that a trick is at the best but a mean thing, and, however sanctified by the motive, my conscience recoiled at the delusion. Yet I could not but think that my pardon would be granted on the discovery, when it should come out that I was an Italian prince travelling through this country as a private gentleman. My father reigns supreme over a nest of inaccessible valleys, lying between Switzerland, the Milanese, and Savoy. It could not but occur to me that you would be agreeably surprised when I should unfold to you my birth, and having married Florence under my fictitious character, should announce to her the rank she had attained, with all the

rapture of an enamoured husband, and all the stage effect of a hero in tragedy or romance. But heaven, pursued I, with an hypocritical softening down of my accents, has visited my sins by cutting me off from such a perennial stream of joy. Pedro de la Membrilla was introduced upon the scene; he must have his name back again, whatever the restitution may cost me. Your promise binds you hand and foot to fix upon him for your son-in-law; it is your duty to give him the preference, without taking my rank and station into the account; without mercy on the forlorn condition to which you are going to reduce me. To be sure, it might be said, but then I should say it who ought not to say it, that your brother had only the authority of an uncle over your daughter, that you are her father, and that there is more right and reason in discharging an actual debt of gratitude towards your preserver, than in being mealy-mouthed about a verbal promise which would press but lightly on the conscience of the most scrupulous casuist.

Yes, without doubt, that argument is indisputable, exclaimed Jerome de Moyadas; and on that ground there can no longer be any question between you and Pedro de la Membrilla. If my brother Austin were still living, he would not think it bad morality to give the preference to a man who has saved my life, nor a bad speculation to close the bargain with a prince who has not disdained to court our alliance. It were an absolute suicide on the part of all my opening prospects; the frantic desperation of an acknowledged incurable, not to dispose of my daughter so illustriously, not to solicit your highness's acceptance of her hand. And yet, sir, resumed I, these things are not to be determined without due deliberation; look at your own interests and safety with a microscopic eye, for though the illustrious channel through which my blood has flowed for ages. . . . You are scarcely serious, interrupted he, in supposing that I can hesitate for a moment. No, may it please your highness; it is my most humble and earnest request that you will deign, on this very evening, to honour the happy Florence with your hand. Well, then! said I, be it so; go yourself and be the bearer of the unlooked-for tidings, announce to her the brilliant career of her exalted destiny.

While the good citizen was putting his best foot foremost, to instil into his daughter that she had made the conquest of a prince, Moralez, who had taken in the whole conversation with greedy ear, threw himself upon his knees before me, and did homage in these bantering terms. Most potent, grave, and august Italian prince, son of a sovereign, supreme over a nest of inaccessible valleys, lying between Switzerland, the Milanese, and Savoy, permit me to humble myself at your highness's feet, in humble acknowledgment of the ecstasy into which you have thrown me. By the honour of a swindler, you are one of the wonders of our world. I always thought myself the first man in the line; but in good truth I doff my bonnet before you, whose genius seems to supersede the lessons of experience. Then you are no longer uneasy about the result, said I to my colleague in iniquity. Oh! as to that, not in the least, answered he. I no longer care a fig for Master Pedro; let him come as soon as he pleases, we are a match for him. Here we are, then, Moralez and myself, safe seated on the saddle, and rising in our stirrups. We even went so far as to begin settling the course we should pursue with the fortune, on which we reckoned so securely, that if it had already been in our pockets, we could not have chuckled more triumphantly over the proverb of "a bird in the hand." Yet we were not in actual possession, which is more than legal right: and the sequel of the adventure proved to us, that many things fall out between the cup and the lip.

We very soon saw the young man of Calatrava returning. He was accompanied by two citizens and by an alguazil, whose dignity was as much supported by his whiskers, and by the lowering overcast of his swarthy aspect, as by the weight of his official character. Florence's father was of the party. Signor de Moyadas, said Pedro to him, here are three honest people come to answer for me: they are acquainted with my person, and can tell you who I am. Yes, undoubtedly, exclaimed the alguazil, I can depose to the fact. I certify to all those whom it may concern, that you are known to me: your name is Pedro, and you are the only son of Juan Velez de la Membrilla: whosoever dares to maintain to the contrary is an impostor. I believe you implicitly, master alguazil, said

the good creature Jerome de Moyadas, rather drily. Your evidence is gospel to me, as well as that of these fair and honest tradesmen you have brought with you. I am fully satisfied that the young gentleman on whose behalf you come is the only son of my brother's correspondent. But what is that to me? I am no longer in the humour to give him my daughter, so there is an end of that.

Oh! then it is quite another matter, said the alguazil. I only come to your house for the purpose of assuring you that this young man is no impostor. You have the authority of a parent over your child, and no one has any right to dictate to you how you are to marry her, and whether you will or no. Neither do I, on my part, interrupted Pedro, pretend to lay any force on the inclinations of Signor de Moyadas; but he will perhaps allow me to ask him why he has so suddenly changed his resolution. Has he any reason to be dissatisfied with me? Alas! let me at least understand, that in losing the sweet hope of becoming his son-in-law, my promised bliss has not been wrested from me by any misconduct of my own. I have no complaint to make of you, answered the old man; nay, I will even tell you more; it is with sincere sorrow that I find myself under the necessity of breaking my word with you, and I heartily beseech you to forgive me for having done so. I am persuaded that you are too generous to bear me any ill-will for having thrown the balance into the scale of a rival, who has saved my life. You see him here, pursued he, introducing my noble self, this is the illustrious personage who threw round me the shield of his protection in my great peril: and, the better still to apologize for my seemingly harsh treatment of yourself, you are to know that he is an Italian prince.

At these last words, Pedro was dumb-founded, and looked as if he could not help it. The two tradesmen opened their eyes as wide as they could stare, with surprise at finding themselves for the first time in princely society. But the alguazil, in the habit of looking at things with the cross eye of suspicion, divined most perspicuously that this marvellous adventure must be a complete humbug; and the verification of the prophecy was calculated to put money into the pocket of the prophet. He therefore conned over my countenance with a very inquisitive regard; but as my

features, which were new to justice, threw him out most cruelly from hunting down the game he was in chase of, he had no alternative but to try his luck on my companion. Unfortunately for my highness of the inaccessible valleys, he knew again the hang-dog features of Moralez; and recollecting to have seen him within the purlieus of a gaol, Ay, ay! exclaimed he, this is one of my established customers. This gentleman is a particular acquaintance of mine, and you may take his character from me for one of the rankest rascals within the kingdoms and principalities of Spain. Softly, look before you leap, most adventurous alguazil, said Jerome de Moyadas; this lad, of whom you draw so unfavourable a picture, is in the travelling retinue of a prince. So much the better, retorted the alguazil; a man would not desire clearer evidence on which to bring in his verdict. If we can but hang the servant, we shall soon send the master to the devil. The case is as undeniable as a feed counsel's plea; these pleasant sparks are a couple of fortune-hunters, who have laid their heads together to take you in. I am an old hound upon this scent; so that, by way of proof presumptive that these merry vagabonds are within the contemplation of the law in that case provided, I shall lodge them where they will be well taken care of. They will have plenty of time for meditation under the chastising philosophy of a turnkey; or should confinement fail to mend their morals, we have a sort of tangible discipline, which insinuates reformation by the inlet of a smarting hide. Stop there, and bethink you in good time, master officer, rejoined the old gentleman; we must not draw the cord tighter than it will bear. You never make any bones, you hangers-on of the law, about hurting the feelings of better men than yourselves. May not this servant be a common cheat, without his master being a swindler? Princes are persons of honour as a matter of course; yet the retainers to a court are inordinate rascals; it requires no conjurer to find that out. Are you playing into the hands of your deluders, with your princes? interrupted the alguazil. This new manufacturer of false pretences is a proficient, take my word for it; but I shall quench his zeal in the service, and gravel the ingenuity of his partner, with a *whereas* and a commitment in due form. The scouts of justice are all round the door, who will worry their game every

inch of the chase, if they do not suffer themselves to be taken quietly on their form. So come along, may it please your serene highness, let us proceed to our destination.

This upshot of the business was a death-blow to me, as well as to Moralez; and our confusion did but infuse doubts into the mind of Jerome de Moyadas, or rather burned, sunk, and destroyed us in his esteem. He began rather to think, not without reason, that we had some little design to impose on his credulity. Nevertheless he acted on this occasion in the spirit of a man of honour and a gentleman. My good friend and protector, said he to the alguazil, your conjectures may be without foundation; on the other hand, they may turn out to have too much truth in them. Whichever of these alternatives may be the fact, let us not look too curiously into their characters. They are both young, and have time enough for amendment if they want it; let them go their ways, and withdraw whithersoever it may best please them. Make no opposition, I beseech you, to their safe egress; it is a favour which you may consider as done to me, and my motive for asking it is to acquit myself of my debt to them. If my heart was not too soft for my profession, answered the alguazil, I should lodge these pretty gentlemen in limbo, in defiance of all your pleadings in their favour; but your eloquence and my susceptibility have relaxed the stern demeanour of justice for this evening. Let them, however, leave town on the spur of the occasion: for if I come across them to-morrow, and there is any faith in an alguazil, they shall see such sport as will be no sport to them.

When it was signified to Moralez and me, culprits as we were, that we were to be let off scot free, we polished up the brass upon our foreheads a little. It was time now to bounce and swagger, and to maintain that we were men of undeniable respectability; but the alguazil looked askew at us, and muttered that least said was soonest mended. I do not know how, but those gentry have a strange knack of curbing our genius; they are complete lords of the ascendant. Florence and her dowry therefore were lost to Pedro de la Membrilla by a turn of the dice, and we may conclude that he was received as the son-in-law of Jerome de Moyadas. I took to my heels with my companion. We blundered on the road to Truxillo, with the consolation at

our hearts of having at least pocketed a hundred pistoles by our frolic. An hour before night-fall we passed through a little village with the intention of putting up for the evening at the next stage. An inn of very tolerable appearance for the place attracted our notice. The landlord and landlady were sitting at the door, on a long bench such as usually graces a pot-house porch. Our host, a tall man, withered, and with one foot in the grave, was tinkling on a cracked guitar to the unbounded emolument of his wife, whose faculties seemed to hang in rapture on the performance. Gentlemen, cried out the intrepid tavern-keeper, when he found that we were not upon the halt, you will do well to stop here; you may fare worse further off. There is a devil of a three leagues to the nearest village, and you will find nothing to make you amends for what you leave behind; you may assure yourselves of that. Take a word of advice, know when you are well used; I will treat you with the fat of the land, and charge you at the lowest rate. There was no resisting such a plea. We came up to our courteous entertainers, paid them the compliments of course, and sitting down by their side, the conversation was supported by all four on the indifferent topics of the day. Our host announced himself as an officer of the Holy Brotherhood, and his rib was a fat laughing squab of a woman, with outward good-nature, but with an eye to make the most of her commodities.

Our discourse was broken in upon by the arrival of from twelve to fifteen riders, some mounted on mules, others on horseback, followed by about thirty sumpter-mules laden with packages. Ah! what a princely retinue! exclaimed the landlord at the sight of so much company: where can I put them all? In an instant the village was crammed full of men and beasts. As luck would have it, there was near the inn an immense barn, where the sumpter-mules and their packages were secured; the saddle-mules and horses were taken care of in other places. As for their masters, they thought less about bespeaking beds than about calling for the bill of fare, and ordering a good supper. The host and hostess, with a servant girl whom they kept, were all upon the alert to make things agreeable. They laid a heavy hand upon all the fowls in the poultry-yard. These precious roasts, with some undisguised rabbits, cats in the

masquerade of a fricassee, and a deluging tureen of soup, stinking of cabbage and greasy with mutton fat, were enough to have given a sickener to the inveterate stomachs of a regiment.

As for Moralez and myself, we cast a scrutinizing eye on these troopers, nor were they behindhand in passing their secret judgments upon us. At last we came together in conversation, and it was proposed on our part, if they had no objection, that we should all sup together. They assured us that they should be extremely happy in our company. Here we are, then, all seated round the table. There was one among them who seemed to take the lead; and for whom the rest, though in the main they were on the most intimate terms with him, thought it necessary on some occasions to testify their deference. In case of a dispute, this high gentleman assumed the umpire, he talked in a tone above the common pitch, going so far sometimes as to contradict in no very courtly phrase the sentiments of others, who, far from giving him back his own, were ready to swear to his assertions and crouch under his rebuke. By accident the discourse turned on Andalusia. Moralez happening to launch out into the praise of Seville, the man about whom I have been talking said to him—My good fellow-traveller, you are ringing the chimes on the city which gave birth to me; at least I am a native of the neighbourhood, since the little town of Mayrena is answerable for my appearance in the world. I have the same story to tell you, answered my companion. I am also of Mayrena; and it is scarcely possible but that our families should be acquainted. Whose son are you? An honest notary's, replied the stranger, by name Martin Moralez. As fate will have it, exclaimed my comrade with emotion, the adventure is very remarkable! You are then my eldest brother, Manuel Moralez? Exactly so, said the other, and if my senses do not deceive me, you your very self are my little brother Lewis, whom I left in the cradle when I turned my back upon my father's house? You are right in your conjectures, answered my honest colleague. At this discovery they both got up from table, and almost hugged the breath out of each other's bodies. At last Signor Manuel said to the company—Gentlemen, this circumstance is altogether marvellous. By mere chance, I have met with a brother and have been challenged by

him, whom I have not seen for more than twenty years: allow me to introduce him. At once all the travellers, who had risen from their seats out of curiosity and good manners, paid their compliments to the younger Moralez, and made him run the gauntlet through their salutations. When these were over, the party returned to the table, nor did they think any more of an adjournment. Bed-time never entered into their heads. The two brothers sat next to one another, and talked in a whisper about their family affairs; the other guests plied the bottle, and made merry in a louder key.

Lewis had a long conference with Manuel; and afterwards, taking me aside, said to me: All these troopers belong to the household of the Count de Montanos, whom the king has very lately appointed to the vice-regal government of Majorca. They are convoying the equipage of the viceroy to Alicant, where they are to embark. My brother, who has risen to be steward to that nobleman, proposes to take me along with him; and on the difficulty I started about leaving you, he told me that if you would be of the party, he would procure you a good berth. My dear friend, pursued he, I advise you not to stand out against this proposal. Let us take the flight together for the island of Majorca. If we find our quarters pleasant, we will fix there; and if they are otherwise, we have nothing to do but to return into Spain.

I accepted the proposal with the best grace possible. What a reinforcement, in the person of young Moralez and myself, to the household of the count! We took our departure in a body from the inn, before daybreak. We got to the city of Alicant by long stages, and there I bought a guitar, and arranged my dress in a manner suited to my new destination, before we embarked. Nothing ran in my head but the island of Majorca; and Lewis Moralez was a new man as well as myself. It should seem as though we had bid farewell to the rogueries of this wicked world. Yet, not to play the liar in the ear of so rigorous a confessor as my own conscience, we had a mind not to pass for villains incarnate, now that we had got into company that had some pretensions to decency: and that was the sum total of our honesty. The natural bent of our genius remained much the same; we were still men of business, but just now keeping a vacation. In short, we went on

board gallantly and gaily in this lucid interval of innocence, and had no idea but of landing at Majorca under the especial care of Neptune and Æolus. Hardly, however, had we cleared the gulf of Alicant, when a sudden and violent storm arose, enough to have frightened better men. Now is my opportunity, or never, to speak of moving accidents by flood; to set the atmosphere on fire, and give a louder explosion to the thunder-cloud; to compare the whistling of the winds to the factions of a populace, and the rolling of the waves to the shock of conflicting hosts; with other such old-fashioned phraseologies as have been heirlooms of Parnassus from time immemorial. But it is useless to be poetical without invention. Suffice it therefore to say, in slang metaphor, that the storm was a devil of a storm, and obliged us to stand in for the point of Cabrera. This is a desert island, with a small fort, at that time garrisoned by an officer and five or six soldiers. Our reception was hospitable and cordial.

As it was necessary for us to stay there some days, for the purpose of refitting our sails and rigging, we devised various kinds of amusements to keep off the foul fiend, melancholy. Every one did as seemed good in his own eyes: some played at cards, others diverted themselves in other ways; but as for me, I went about exploring the island, with such of our gentry as had either a curiosity or a taste for the picturesque. We were frequently obliged to clamber from rock to rock; for the face of the country is rugged, and the soil scanty, presenting a scene difficult of access, but interesting from its wildness. One day, while we were speculating on these dry and barren prospects, and extracting a moral from the vagaries of nature, who can swell into the fruitful mother and the copious nurse, or shrink into the lean and loathsome skeleton as she pleases, our sense was all at once regaled with a most delicious fragrance. We turned as with a common impulse towards the east, whence the scented gale seemed to come. To our utter astonishment, we discovered among the rocks a green plat of considerable dimensions, gay with honeysuckles more luxuriant and more odorous than even those which thrive so greatly in the climate of Andalusia. We were not sorry to approach nearer these delicious shrubs, which were wasting their sweetness in such unchecked profusion, when it turned out that they

lined the entrance of a very deep cavern. The opening was wide, and the recess in consequence partially illuminated. We were determined to explore; and descended by some stone steps overgrown with flowers on each side, so that it was difficult to say whether the approach was formed by art or nature. When we had got down, we saw several little streams winding over a sand, the yellow lustre of which outrivalled gold. These drew their sources from the continual distillations of the rock within, and lost themselves again in the hollows of the ground. The water looked so clear, that we were tempted to drink of it, and such was its freshness, that we made a party to return the next day, with some bottles of generous wine, which we were persuaded would acquire new zest from the retreat where they were to be quaffed.

It was not without regret that we left so agreeable a place: nor did we omit, on our return to the fort, boasting among our comrades of so interesting a discovery. The commander of the fortress, however, with the warmest professions of friendship, warned us against going any more to the cavern, with which we were so much delighted. And why so? said I, is there anything to be afraid of? Most undoubtedly, answered he. The corsairs of Algiers and Tripoli sometimes land upon this island, for the purpose of watering at that spring. One day they surprised two soldiers of my garrison there, whom they carried into slavery. It was in vain that the officer assumed a tone of kind dissuasion; nothing could prevent us from going. We fancied that he meant to play upon our fears; and the day following I returned to the cavern with three adventurous blades of our establishment. We were even fool-hardy enough to leave our fire-arms behind as a sort of bravado. Young Moralez declined being of the party: the fort and the gaming-table had more charms for him, as well as for his brother.

We went down to the bottom of the cave, as on the preceding day, and set some bottles of the wine we had brought with us to cool in the rivulets. While we were enjoying them in all the luxury of elegant conviviality, our wits set in motion by the novelty of the scene, and the echo reverberating to the music of our guitars, we espied at the mouth of the cavern several abominable faces overgrown with

whiskers; neither did their turbans and Turkish dresses render them a whit more amiable in our conceits. We nevertheless took it into our heads that it was a frolic of our own party, set on by the commanding officer of the fort, and that they had disguised themselves for the purpose of playing us a trick. With this impression on our minds, we set up a horse-laugh, and allowed a quiet entrance to about ten, without thinking of making any resistance. In a few moments our eyes were opened to that fatal error, and we were convinced, in sober sadness, that it was a corsair at the head of his crew, come to carry us away. Surrender, you Christian dogs, cried he in most outlandish Castilian, or prepare for instant death. At the same time the men who accompanied him levelled their pieces at us, and our ribs would have been well lined with the contents, if we had resisted in the least. Slavery seemed the better alternative than death, so that we delivered our swords to the pirate. He ordered us to be handcuffed and carried on board his vessel, which was moored not far off; then, setting sail, he steered with a fair wind towards Algiers.

Thus were we punished for having neglected the warning given us by the officer of the garrison. The first thing the corsair did was to put his hand into our pockets and make free with our money. No bad windfall for him! The two hundred pistoles from the greenhorns at Placentia; the hundred which Moralez had received from Jerome de Moyadas, and which, as ill luck would have it, were in my custody; all this was swept away without a single qualm of conscience. My companions too had their purses well lined; and it was all fish that came to the net. The pirate seemed to chuckle at so successful a drag; and the scoundrel, not contented with chousing us of our cash, insulted us with his infernal Moorish witticisms: but the edge of his satire was not half so keen as the dire necessity which made us the subject of it. After a thousand clumsy sarcasms, he called for the bottles which we had set to cool in the fountain; those irreligious Mahometans not having scrupled to load their consciences with the conveyance of the unholy fermentation. The master and his man pledged one another in many a Christian bumper, and drank to our better acquaintance with a most provoking mockery.

While this farce was acting, my comrades wore a hanging

look, which testified how pleasantly their thoughts were employed. They were so much the more out of conceit with their captivity, as they thought they had drawn a prize in the lottery of human life. The island of Majorca, with all its luxuries and delights, was a melancholy contrast with their present situation. For my part, I had the good sense to take things as I found them. Less put out of my way by my misfortune than the rest, I joined in conversation with this transmarine joker, and shewed him that wit was the common language of Africa and of Europe. He was pleased with my accommodating spirit. Young man, said he, instead of groaning and sighing, you do well to arm yourself with patience, and to fall in with the current of your destiny. Play us a little air, continued he, observing that I had a guitar by my side; let us have a specimen of your skill. I complied with his command, as soon as my arms were loosened from their confinement, and began to thrum away in a style that drew down the applauses of my discerning audience. It is true that I had been taught by the best master in Madrid, and that I played very tolerably for an amateur upon that instrument. A song was then called for, and my voice gave equal satisfaction. All the Turks on board testified by gestures of admiration the delight with which my performance inspired them; from which circumstance it was but modest to conclude, that vocal music had made no very extraordinary progress in their part of the world. The pirate whispered in my ear, that my slavery should be no disadvantage to me; and that with my talents I might reckon upon an employment, by which my lot would be rendered not only supportable, but happy.

I felt somewhat encouraged by these assurances; but flattering as they were, I was not without my uneasiness as to the employment, which the corsair held out as a nameless, but invaluable boon. When we arrived in the port of Algiers, a great number of persons were collected to receive us; and we had not yet disembarked, when they uttered a thousand shouts of joy. Add to this, that the air re-echoed with a confused sound of trumpets, of Moorish flutes, and of other instruments, the fashion of that country, forming a symphony of deafening clangour, but very doubtful harmony. The occasion of these rejoicings proceeded from a

false report, which had been current about the town. It had been the general talk that the renegado Mahomet, meaning our amiable pirate, had lost his life in the attack of a large Genoese vessel; so that all his friends, informed of his return, were eager to hail him with these thundering demonstrations of attachment.

We had no sooner set foot on shore, than my companions and myself were conducted to the palace of the bashaw Soliman, where a Christian secretary, questioning us individually one after another, inquired into our names, our ages, our country, our religion, and our qualifications. Then Mahomet, presenting me to the bashaw, paid my voice more compliments than it deserved, and told him that I played on the guitar with a most ravishing expression. This was enough to influence Soliman in his choice of me for his own immediate service. I took up my abode therefore in his seraglio. The other captives were led into the public market, and sold there at the usual rate of Christian cattle. What Mahomet had foretold to me on ship-board was completely verified; my condition was exactly to my mind. I was not consigned to the stronghold of a prison, nor kept to any works of oppressive labour. My indulgent master stationed me in a particular quarter, with five or six slaves of superior rank, who were in momentary expectation of being ransomed, and were therefore favoured in the distribution of our tasks. The care of watering the orange-trees and flowers in the gardens was allotted as my portion. There could not be a more agreeable or less fatiguing employment.

Soliman was a man about forty years of age, well made as to figure, tolerably accomplished as to his mind, and as much of a lady's man as could be expected from a Turk. His favourite was a Cashmirian, whose wit and beauty had acquired an absolute dominion over his affections. He loved her even to idolatry. Not a day but he paid his court to her by some elegant entertainment; at one time a concert of vocal and instrumental music, at another, a dramatic performance after the fashion of the Turks, which fashion implies a loose sort of comedy, where moral and modesty enter about as much into the contemplation of the contriver, as do Aristotle and his unities. The favourite, whose name was Farrukhnaz, was passionately enamoured of these

exhibitions; she sometimes even got up among her own women some Arabian melodrames to be performed before her admirer. She took some of the parts herself, and charmed the spectators by the abundant grace and vivacity of her action. One day when I was among the musicians at one of these representations, Soliman ordered me to play on the guitar, and to sing a solo between the acts of the piece. I had the good fortune to give satisfaction, and was received with applause. The favourite herself, if my vanity did not mislead me, cast glances towards me of no unfavourable interpretation.

On the next day, as I watering the orange-trees in the gardens, there passed close by me an eunuch, who, without stopping or saying a word, threw down a note at my feet. I picked it up with an emotion, strangely compounded of pleasure and alarm. I crouched upon the ground, for fear of being observed from the windows of the seraglio; and, concealing myself behind the boxes in which the orange-trees were planted, opened this unexpected enclosure. There I found a diamond of very considerable value, and these words, in genuine Castilian: "Young Christian, return thanks to heaven for your captivity. Love and fortune will render it the harbinger of your bliss: love, if you are alive to the attractions of a fine person, and fortune, if you have the hardihood to confront danger in every direction."

I could not for a moment doubt that the letter was written by the favourite sultana; the style and the diamond were more than presumptive evidence against her. Besides that nature did not cast me in the mould of a coward, the vanity of keeping up a good understanding with the mistress of a scoundrelly Mahometan in office, and, more than all the temptations of vanity or inclination, the hope of cajoling her out of four times as much as the curmudgeon her master would demand for my ransom, put me into conceit with the intention of trying my luck at a venture, whatever risk might be incurred in the experiment. I went on with my gardening, but always harping on the means of getting into the apartment of Farrukhnaz, or rather waiting till she opened a door of communication: for I was clearly of opinion that she would not stop upon the threshold, but meet me half way in the career of love and

danger. My conjecture was not altogether without foundation. The same eunuch who had led me into this amorous reverie passed the same way an hour afterwards, and said to me: Christian, have you communed with your own determinations, and will you win a fair lady, by abjuring a faint heart? I answered in the affirmative. Well, then, rejoined he, heaven sprinkle its dew upon your resolutions! You shall see me betimes to-morrow morning. With this comfortable assurance he withdrew. The following day, I actually saw him make his appearance about eight o'clock in the morning. He made a signal for me to go along with him: I obeyed the summons; and he conducted me into a hall where was a large wrapper of canvas which he and another eunuch had just brought thither, with the design of carrying it to the sultana's apartment, for the purpose of furnishing a scene for an Arabian pantomime, in preparation for the amusement of the bashaw.

The two eunuchs unrolled the cloth, and laid me at my length on the proscenium; then, at the risk of turning the farce into a tragedy by stifling me, they rolled it up again, with its palpitating contents. In the next place, taking hold of it at each end, they conveyed me with impunity by this device into the chamber devoted to the repose of the beautiful Cashmirian. She was alone with an old slave devoted to her wishes. They helped each other to unroll their precious bale of goods; and Farrukhnaz, at the sight of her consignment, set up such an alarm of delight, as exhibited the woman of the East, without forgetting her prurient propensities. With all my natural bias towards adventure, I could not recognize myself as at once transported into the private apartment of the women, without something like an inauspicious damp upon my joy. The lady was aware of my feelings, and anxious to dissipate the unpleasant part of them, Young man, said she, you have nothing to fear. Soliman is just gone to his country-house: he is safely lodged for the day; so that we shall be able to entertain one another here at our ease.

Hints like these rallied my scattered spirits, and gave a cast to my countenance which confirmed the speculation of the favourite. You have won my heart, pursued she, and it is in my contemplation to soften the severity of your bondage. You seem to be worthy of the sentiments which

I have conceived for you. Though disguised under the garb of a slave, your air is noble, and your physiognomy of a character to recommend you to the good graces of a lady. Such an exterior must belong to one above the common. Unbosom yourself to me in confidence; tell me who you are. I know that captives of superior condition and family disguise their real circumstances, to be redeemed at a lower rate; but you have no inducement to practise such a deception on me; and it would even be a precaution revolting to my designs in your favour, since I here pledge myself for your liberty. Deal with sincerity, therefore, and own to me at once that you are a youth of illustrious rank. In good earnest, then, madam, answered I, it would ill become me to repay your generous partiality with dissimulation. You are absolutely bent upon it, that I should entrust you with the secret of my quality, and commands like yours are not to be questioned or resisted. I am the son of a Spanish grandee. And so it might actually have been, for anything that I know to the contrary; at all events, the sultana gave me credit for it, so that with considerable self-congratulation, at having fixed her regard on a gentleman of some little figure in the world, she assured me that it only depended on herself, whether or no we should meet pretty often in private. In fact, we were no niggards of our mutual good-will at the very first approaches. I never met with a woman who was more what a man wishes her to be. She was besides an expert linguist, above all in Castilian, which she spoke with fluency and purity. When she conceived it to be time for us to part, I got by her order into a large osier basket, with an embroidered silk covering of her own manufacture; then the two slaves who had brought me in were called, to carry me out as a present from the favourite to her deluded lord; for under this pretence it is easy to screen any amorous exports from the inspection of the officers entrusted with the superintendence of the women.

As for Farrukhnaz and myself, we were not slack in other devices to bring us together; and that lovely captive inspired me by degrees with as much love as she herself entertained for me. Our good understanding was kept a profound secret for full two months, notwithstanding the extreme difficulty in a seraglio of veiling the mysteries

of love for any length of time from those uninitiated, whose eyes are jaundiced by their own disqualification. Neither was the discovery made at last by the means of envious spies. An unlucky chance disconcerted all our little arrangements, and the features of my fortune were at once aggravated into a frown. One day when I had been introduced into the presence of the sultana, in the body of an artificial dragon, invented as a machine for a spectacle, while we were parleying most amicably together, Soliman, to whom we had given credit for having gone out of town, made his unwelcome appearance. He entered so abruptly into his favourite's apartment, as scarcely to leave time for the old slave to give us notice of his approach. Still less was there any opportunity to conceal me. Thus therefore, with all my enormities on my head, was I the first object which presented itself to the astonished eyes of the bashaw.

He seemed considerably startled at the sight; and his countenance flashed with indignation on the instant. I considered myself as a wretch just hovering on the brink of the grave; and death seemed arrayed in all the paraphernalia of torture. As for Farrukhnaz, it was very evident, in good truth, that she was miserably frightened; but instead of owning her crime and imploring pardon, she said to Soliman: My lord, before you pronounce my sentence, be pleased to hear my defence. Appearances, doubtless, condemn me; and it must strike you that I have committed an act of treason, worthy the most dreadful punishments. It is true, I have brought this young captive hither; it is true that I have introduced him into my apartment, with just such artifices as I should have used if I had entertained a violent passion for him. And yet, I call our great prophet to witness, in spite of these seeming irregularities, I am not faithless to you. It was my wish to converse with this Christian slave, for the purpose of disengaging him from his own sect, and proselyting him to that of the true believers. But I have found in him a principle of resistance for which I was not well prepared. I have, however, conquered his prejudices; and he came to give me an assurance that he would embrace Mahometanism.

I do not mean to deny that it was an act of duty to have contradicted the favourite flatly, without paying the least attention to the dangerous predicament in which I stood:

but my spirits were taken by surprise; the beloved partner of my imprudence was hovering on the brink of perdition; and my own fate was involved with hers. How could I do otherwise than give a silent and perturbed assent to her impious fiction? My tongue, indeed, refused to ratify it; but the bashaw, persuaded by my acquiescence that his mistress had told him the whole truth and nothing but the truth, suffered his angry spirit to be tranquillized. Madam, answered he, I am willing to believe that you have committed no infidelity towards me; and that the desire of doing a thing agreeable to the prophet has been the means of leading you on to risk so hazardous and delicate a proceeding. I forgive, therefore, your imprudence, on condition that this captive assumes the turban on the spot. He sent immediately for a priest* to initiate me. My dress was changed with all due ceremony into the Turkish. They did just what they pleased with me; nor had I the courage to object: or, to do myself more justice, I knew not what was becoming of me, in so dreadful a disorder of all my faculties and feelings. There are other good Christians in the world, who have been guilty of apostatizing on less imminent emergencies!

After the ceremony, I took my leave of the seraglio, to go and possess myself, under the name of Sidy Hali, of an inferior office which Soliman had given me. I never saw the sultana more; but an eunuch of hers came one day to look after me. He brought with him, as a present from his mistress, jewels to a very considerable amount, accompanied with a letter in which the lady assured me she should never forget my generous compliance, in turning Mahometan to save her life. In point of fact, besides these rich gifts, lavished upon me by Farrukhnaz, I obtained through her interest a more considerable employment than my first, and in the course of six or seven years became one of the richest renegadoes in the town of Algiers.

You must be perfectly aware, that if I assisted at the prayers put up by the Mussulmen in their mosques, or fulfilled the other observances of their religion, it was all a mere copy of my countenance. My inclination was always

[1]These wandering priests are at present known in Africa by the name of Marabut. The first gymnosophists of Ethiopia most probably were nothing more.—TRANSLATOR.

uniform and determined, as to returning before my death into the bosom of our holy church; and with this view I looked forward to withdrawing some time or other into Spain or Italy with the riches I should have accumulated. But there seemed no reason whatever against enjoying life in the interval. I was established in a magnificent mansion, with gardens of extent and beauty, a numerous train of slaves, and a well-appointed equipage of pretty girls in my seraglio. Though the Mahometans are forbidden the use of wine in that country, they are not backward for the most part in their stolen libations. As for me, my orgies were without either a mask or a blush, after the manner of my brother renegadoes. I remember in particular two of my bottle companions, with whom I often drank down the night before we rose from table. One was a Jew, and the other an Arabian. I took them to be good sort of people; and with that impression, lived in unconstrained familiarity with them. One evening I invited them to sup at my house. On that very day a dog of mine died—it was a pet; we performed our pious ablutions on his lifeless clay, and buried him with all the solemn obsequies attendant on a Mahometan funeral. This act of ours was not designed to turn the religion we outwardly professed into ridicule; it was only to furnish ourselves with amusement, and give loose to a ludicrous whim which struck us in the moment of jollity, that of paying the last offices of humanity to my dog.

This action was, however, very near laying me by the heels. On the following day there came a fellow to my house, saying, Master Sidy Hali, it is no laughing matter that induces me to pay you this visit. My employer, the cadi, wants to have a word in your ear; be so good, if you please, as just to step to his office, without loss of time. An Arabian merchant, who supped with you last night, has laid an information respecting a certain act of irreverence perpetrated by you, on occasion of a dog which you buried. It is on that charge that I summon you to appear this day before the judge; and in case of failure, you are hereby warned that you will be the subject of a criminal prosecution. Away went he, leaving me to digest his discourse; but the citation stuck in my throat, and took away my appetite. The Arabian had no reason whatever to set his face against me; and I could not comprehend the meaning of the dog's

trick the scoundrel had played me. The circumstance at all events demanded my prompt attention. I knew the cadi's character: a saint on the outside, but a sinner in his heart. Away went I therefore to wait on this judge, but not with empty pockets. He sent for me into his private room, and began upon me in all the vehemence of pious indignation: You are a fellow rejected out of paradise! a blasphemer of our holy law! a man loathsome and abominable to look upon! You have performed the funeral service of a Mussulman over a dog. What an act of sacrilege! Is it thus, then, that you reverence our most holy ceremonies? Have you only turned Mahometan to laugh at our devotions and our rites? My honoured master, answered I, the Arabian who has told you such a cock-and-bull story is a wolf in sheep's clothing; and more than that, he is even an accomplice in my crime, if it is one, to grant such rest as to peace-parted souls to a faithful household servant, to an animal with more good qualities than half the two-legged Mahometans out of Christendom. His attachment besides to people of merit and consideration in the world was at once moral and sensible; and at his death he left several little tokens of remembrance to his friends. By his last will and testament he bequeathed his effects in the manner therein mentioned, and did me the honour to name me for his executor. This old crony came in for twenty crowns, that for thirty, and another for a cool hundred; but your worship is interested deeply in this instrument, pursued I, drawing out my purse; he has left you residuary legatee, and here is the amount of the bequest. The cadi's gravity could not but relax, after the posthumous kindness of his deceased friend; and he laughed outright in the face of the mock executor. As we were alone, there was no occasion to make wry mouths at the purse, and my acquittal was pronounced in these words: Go, Master Sidy Hali; it was a very pious act of yours, to enlarge the obsequies of a dog, who had so manly a fellow-feeling for honest folks.

By this device I got out of the scrape; and if the hint did not increase my religion, it doubled my circumspection. I was determined no longer to open either my cellar or my soul in presence of Arabian or Jew. My bottle companion henceforward was a young gentleman from Leghorn,

who had the happiness of being my slave. His name was Azarini. I was of another kidney from renegadoes in general, who impose greater hardships on their Christian slaves than do the Turks themselves. All my captives waited for the period of their ransom, without any impatient hankering after home. My behaviour to them was, in truth, so gentle and fatherly, that many of them assured me they were more afraid of changing their master than anxious after their liberty; whatever magic that word may have to the ears of those who have felt what it is to be deprived of it.

One day the bashaw's corsairs came into port with considerable prizes. Their cargo amounted to more than a hundred slaves of either sex, carried off from the Spanish coast. Soliman retained but a very small number, and all the rest were sold. I happened to go to market, and bought a Spanish girl, ten or twelve years old. She cried as if her heart would break, and looked the picture of despair. It seemed strange, that at her age slavery should make such an impression on her. I told her, in Castilian, to combat with her terrors: and assured her that she was fallen into the hands of a master who had not put off humanity when he took up the turban. The little mourner, not initiated in the trade of grief, pursued the subject of her lamentations without listening to me. Her whole soul seemed to be breathed in her sighs; she descanted on her wretched fate, and exclaimed from time to time in softened accents: O my mother, why were we ever parted? I could bear my lot with patience, might we share it together. With these lamentations on her lips, she turned round towards a woman of from five-and-forty to fifty, standing at the distance of several paces, and waiting with her eyes fixed to the ground, in a determined, sullen silence, till she met with a purchaser. I asked my young bargain if the lady she was looking at was her mother. Alas! she is, indeed, sir, replied the girl; for the love of God, do not let me be parted from her. Well, then, my distressed little damsel, said I, if it will give you any pleasure, there is no more to do than to settle you both in the same quarters, and then you will give over your murmuring. On the very moment I went up to the mother, with the intention of cheapening her; but no sooner did I cast my eyes on her

face, than I knew again, with what emotion you may guess! the very form and pressure of Lucinda. Just heaven! said I within myself, this is my mother! Nature whispers it in my ear, and can I doubt her evidence? On her part, whether a keen resentment of her woes pointed out an enemy in every object on which she glanced, or else it might be my dress that disfigured me; . . . . or else I might have grown a little older in about a dozen years since she had seen me . . . . but however historians may account for it, she did not know me. But I knew her, and bought her: the pair were sent home to my house.

When they were safely lodged, I wished to surprise them with the pleasure of ascertaining who I was. Madam, said I to Lucinda, is it possible that my features should not strike you? 'Tis true, I wear whiskers and a turban: but is Raphael less your son for that? My mother thrilled through all her frame at these words, looked at me with an eager gaze, my whole self rushed into her recollection, and into each other's arms we affectionately flew. I then caressed, in moderated ecstasies, her daughter, who perhaps knew as much about having a brother as I did about having a sister. Tell the truth, said I to my mother; in all your theatrical discoveries, did you ever meet with one so truly natural and dramatic as this? My dear son, answered she, in an accent of sorrow, the first sight of you after so long a separation overwhelmed me with joy, but the revulsion was only the more deeply distressing. In what condition, alas! do I again behold you? My own slavery is a thousand times less revolting to my feelings than the disgraceful habiliments. . . . . Heyday! By all the powers, madam, interrupted I with a hearty laugh, I am quite delighted with your newly-acquired morality: this is excellent in an actress. Well! well! as heaven is my judge, my honoured mamma, you are mightily improved in your principles, if my transformation astounds your religious eyesight. So far from quarrelling with your turban, consider me rather as an actor, playing a Turkish character on the stage of the world. Though a conformist, I am just as much a Mussulman as when I was in Spain; nay, in the bottom of my heart, I never was a more firm believer in our Christian creed than at the present moment. When you shall become acquainted with all my hair-breadth escapes, since I have been do-

mesticated in this country, you will not be rigorous in your censure. Love has been the cause of my apostasy, and he who worships at that shrine may be absolved from all other infidelities. I have a little of my mother in me, take my word for it. Another reason besides ought to moderate your disgust at seeing me under my present circumstances. You were expecting to experience a harsh captivity in Algiers, but you find in your protector a son, with all the tenderness and reverence befitting his relation to you, and rich enough to maintain you here in plenty and comfort, till a favourable opportunity offers of returning with safety into Spain. Admit, therefore, the force of the proverb, which says that evil itself is good for something.

My dear son, said Lucinda, since you fully intend one day to go back into your own country, and to throw off the mantle of Mahomet, my scruples are all satisfied. Thanks to heaven, continued she, I shall be able to carry back your sister Beatrice safe and sound into Castile. Yes, madam, exclaimed I, so you may. We will all three, as soon as the season may serve, go and throw ourselves into the bosom of our family: for I make no matter of doubt but you have still in Spain other indisputable evidences of your prolific powers. No, said my mother, I have only you two, the offspring of my body; and you are to know that Beatrice is the fruit of a marriage, manufactured in as workmanlike a manner as any within the pale of the church. And pray, for what reason, replied I, might not my little sister have been just as contraband as myself? How did you ever work yourself up to the formidable resolution of marrying? I have heard you say a hundred times, in my childhood, that there was no benefit of clergy for a pretty woman who could commit such an offence as to take up with a husband. Times and seasons ebb and flow, my son, rejoined she. Men of the most resolute character may be shaken in their purposes: and do you require that a woman should be inflexible in hers? But I will now relate to you the story of my life since your departure from Madrid. She then began the following recital, which will never be obliterated from my memory. I will not withhold from you so curious a narrative.

It is nearly thirteen years, if you recollect, said my mother, since you left young Leganez. Just at that time,

the Duke of Medina Celi told me that he had a mind to sup with me one evening in private. The day was fixed. I made preparations for his reception: he came, and I pleased him. He required from me the sacrifice of all his rivals, past, present, and to come. I came into his terms, in the hope of being well paid for my complaisance. There was no deficiency on that score. On the very next morning, I received presents from him, which were followed up by a long train of kindred attentions. I was afraid of not being able to hold in my chains a man of his exalted rank: and this apprehension was the better founded, because it was a matter of notoriety, that he had escaped from the clutches of several celebrated beauties, whose chains he had worn, only for the purpose of breaking. But for all that, so far from surfeiting on the relish of my kindness, his appetite grew by what it fed on. In short, I found out the secret of entertaining him, and impounding his heart, naturally roving, so that it should not go astray according to its usual volatility.

He had now been my admirer for three months, and I had every reason to flatter myself that the arrangement would be lasting, when a lady of my acquaintance and myself happened to go to an assembly, where the duchess his wife was of the party. We were invited to a concert of vocal and instrumental music. We accidentally seated ourselves too near the duchess, who took it into her head to be affronted, that I should exhibit my person in a place where she was. She sent me word by one of her women, that she should take it as a favour if I would quit the room immediately. I sent back an answer, just as saucy as the message. The duchess, irritated to fury, laid her wrongs before her husband, who came to me in person, and said: Retire, Lucinda. Though noblemen of the first rank attach themselves to pretty playthings like yourself, it is highly unbecoming in you to forget your proper distance. If we love you better than our wives, we honour our wives more than you: whenever, therefore, your insolence shall go so far as to set yourselves up for their rivals under their very noses, you will always be mortified, and made to know your places.

Fortunately the duke held his cruel language to me in so low a tone of voice as not to have been overheard by the

people about us. I withdrew in deep confusion, and cried with vexation at having incurred such an affront. At once, to crown my shame and aggravate my chastisement, the actors and actresses got hold of the story on the very same evening. To do them justice, these gentry must contrive to entertain a familiar spirit, whose business is to fly about, and whisper in the ear of one whatever falls out amiss to the other. Suppose, for instance, that an actor gets drunk and makes a fool of himself, or an actress gets hold of a rich cully and makes a fool of him! The green-room is sure to ring with all the particulars, and a few more than are true. All my kindred of the sock and buskin were informed at once of what had happened at the concert, and a blessed life they led me with their quips and quiddities. Never was there charity like theirs. Without beginning at home, heaven only knows where it ends! But I held myself too high to be affected by their jibes and jeers: nor did even the loss of the Duke de Medina Celi hang heavy on my spirits; for true it was, I never saw him more at my toilette, but learned, a very short time after, that he had got into the trammels of a little warbler.

When a theatrical lady has the good luck to be in fashion, she may change her lover as often as her petticoat: and one noble fool, should he even recover his wits at the end of three days, serves excellently well for a decoy to his successor. No sooner was it buzzed about Madrid, that the duke had raised the siege, than a new host of would-be conquerors appeared before the trenches. The very rivals whom I had sacrificed to his wishes, looking at my charms through the magnifying medium of delay and disappointment, came back again in crowds to encounter new caprices; to say nothing of a thousand fresh hearts, ready to bargain on the mere report of my being to let. I had never been so exclusively the mode. Of all the men who put in for being cajoled by me, a portly German, belonging to the Duke of Ossuna's household, seemed to bid highest. Not that his personal attractions were by any means the most catching; but then there were a thousand amiable pistoles on the list of candidates, scraped together by perquisites in his master's service, and turned adrift with the prodigality of a prince, in the hope of becoming my favoured lover. This fat pigeon to be plucked was by name Brutan-

dorf. As long as his pockets were lined, his reception was warm: empty purses meet with fastened doors. The principles on which my friendship rested were not altogether to his taste. He came to the play to look after me during the performance. I was behind the scenes. It was his humour to load me with reproaches; it was mine to laugh in his face. This provoked his boorish wrath, and he gave me a box on the ear, like a clumsy-fisted German as he was. I set up a loud scream: the business of the stage was suspended. I came forward to the front, and, addressing the Duke of Ossuna, who was at the play on that occasion with his lady duchess, begged his protection from the German gallantry of his establishment. The duke gave orders for our proceeding with the piece, and intimated that he would hear the parties after the curtain had dropped. At the conclusion of the play I presented myself in all the dreary pomp of tragedy before the duke, and laid open my griefs in all the majesty of woe. As for my German pugilist, his defence was on a level with his provocation; so far from being sorry for what he had done, his fingers itched to give me another dressing. The cause being heard pro and con, the Duke of Ossuna said to his Scandinavian savage: Brutandorf, I dismiss you from my service, and beg never to see anything more of you, not because you have given a box on the ear to an actress, but for your failure in respect to your master and mistress, in having presumed to interrupt the progress of the play in their presence.

This decision was a bitter pill for me to swallow. It was high treason against my histrionic majesty, that the German was not turned off on the ground of having insulted me. It seemed difficult to conceive the possibility of a greater crime than that of insulting a principal actress: and where crimes are parallel, punishments should tally. The retribution in this case would have been exemplary; and I expected no less. This unpleasant occurrence undeceived me, and proved, to my mortification, that the public distinguished between the actors and the personages they may chance to enact. On this conviction, my pride revolted at the theatre: I resolved to give up my engagements to go and live at a distance from Madrid. I fixed on the city of Valencia for the place of my retreat, and went thither under a feigned character, with a property of

twenty thousand ducats in money and jewels: a sum in my mind more than sufficient to maintain me for the remainder of my days, since it was my purpose to lead a retired life. I rented a small house at Valencia, and limited my establishment to a female servant and a page, who were as ignorant of my birth, parentage, and education, as the rest of the town. I gave myself out for the widow of an officer belonging to the king's household, and intimated that I had made choice of Valencia for my residence, on the report that it was one of the most agreeable neighbourhoods in Spain. I saw very little company, and maintained so reserved a deportment, that there was never the slightest suspicion of my having been an actress. Yet, notwithstanding all the pains I took to hide myself from the garish eye of day, I had worse success against the piercing ken of a gentleman, who had a country seat near Paterna. He was of an ancient family, in person genteel and manly, from five-and-thirty to forty years of age, nobly connected, but scandalously in debt; a contradiction in the vocabulary of honour, neither more unaccountable nor uncommon in the kingdom of Valencia, than what takes place every day in other parts of the civilized world.

This gentleman of a generation or two before the present, finding my person to his liking, was desirous of knowing if in other respects I was a commodity for his market. He set every engine at work to enquire into the most minute particulars, and had the pleasure to learn from general report, that I was a warm widow with a comfortable jointure, and a person little, if anything, the worse for wear. It struck him that this was just the match; so that in a very short time an old lady came to my house, telling me, from him, that with equal admiration of my virtues and my charms, he laid himself and his fortune at my feet, and was ready to lead me to the altar, if I could condescend so far as to become his wife. I required three days to make up my mind on the subject. In this interval, I made inquiries about the gentleman; and hearing a good character of him, notwithstanding the deranged state of his finances, it was my determination to marry him without more ado, so that the preliminaries were soon ratified by a definitive treaty.

Don Manuel de Xerica, for that was my husband's

name, took me immediately after the ceremony to his castle, which had an air of antiquity highly flattering to his family pride. He told a story about one of his ancestors who built it in days of yore, and because it was not founded the day before yesterday, jumped to a conclusion that there was not a more ancient house in Spain than that of Xerica. But nobility, like perishable merchandise, will run to decay; the castle, shored up on this side and on that, was in the very agony of tumbling to pieces: what a buttress for Don Manuel and for his old walls was his marriage with me! More than half my savings were laid out on repairs; and the residue was wanted to set us going in a genteel style among our country neighbours. Behold me, then, you who can believe it, landed on a new planet, transformed into the presiding genius of a castle, the Lady Bountiful of my parish: our stage machinery could never have furnished such a change! I was too good an actress not to have supported my new rank and dignity with appropriate grace. I assumed high airs, theatrical grandeurs, a most dignified strut and demeanour; all which made the bumpkins conceive a wonderful idea of my exalted origin. How would they not have tickled their fancies at my expense, had they known the real truth of the case! The gentry of the neighbourhood would have scoffed at me most unmercifully, and the country people would have been much more chary of the respect they showed me.

It was now near six years that I had lived very happily with Don Manuel, when he ended ways, means, and life together. My legacy consisted of a broken fortune to splice, and your sister Beatrice, then more than four years old, to maintain. The castle, which was our only tangible resource, was unfortunately mortgaged to several creditors, the principal of whom was one Bernard Astuto. Cunning by name, and cunning by nature! He practised as an attorney at Valencia, and bore his faculties in all the infamy of pettifogging; law and equity conspired in his person to push the trade of cozening and swindling to the utmost extremity. To think of falling into the clutches of such a creditor! A gentleman's property under the gripe of such a claw as this attorney's affords much the same sport as a lamb to a wolf, or a dove to a kite. Nearly after the fashion of these beasts and birds of prey, did

Signor Astuto, when informed of my husband's death, hover over his victim, concealing his fell purpose under the ambush of the law. The whole estate would have been swallowed up in pleadings, affidavits, demurrers, and rejoinders, but for the light thrown upon the proceedings by my lucky star; under whose influence the plaintiff was turned at once into defendant, and was left without a reply to the arguments of these all-powerful eyes. I got to the blind side of him in an interview, which I contrived during the progress of our litigation. Nothing was wanting on my part, I own it frankly, to fill him brimful of the tender passion; an ardent longing to save my goods, chattels, and domain, made me practise upon him, to my own disgust, that system of coquettish tactics and flirtation which had drawn so many former fools into an ambuscade. Yet, with all the resources of a veteran, I was very near letting the attorney escape. He was so barricaded by mouldy parchments, so immured in actions and informations, as scarcely to seem susceptible of any love but the love of law. The truth, however, was, that this moping pettifogger, this porer over ponderous abridgments, this scrawler of acts and deeds, had more young blood in him than I was aware of, and a trick of looking at me out of the corner of his eye. He professed to be a novice in the art of courtship. My whole heart and soul, madam, said he, have been wedded to my profession; and the consequence has been, that the uses and customs of gallantry have seemed weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable to me. But though not a man of outward show, I am well furnished with the stock in trade of love. To come to the point at once, if you can resolve in your mind to marry me, we will make a grand bonfire of the whole lawsuit; and I will give the go-by to those rascally creditors, who have joined issue with me in our attack upon your estate. You shall have the life interest, and your daughter the reversion. So good a bargain for Beatrice and myself would not allow of any wavering: I closed without delay on the conditions. The attorney kept his word most miraculously: he turned short round upon the other creditors, defeated them with the very weapons himself had furnished with their joint campaign, and secured me in the possession of my house and lands. It was probably the first time in

his life that he had taken up the cause of the widow and the orphan.

Thus did I become the honoured wife of an attorney, without losing my rank as the lady of the manor. But this incongruous marriage ruined me in the esteem of the gentry about Valencia. The women of quality looked upon me as a person who had lowered herself, and refused any longer to visit me. This inevitably threw me on the acquaintance of the tradespeople; a circumstance which could not do otherwise than hurt my feelings a little at first, because I had been accustomed, for the last six years, to associate only with ladies of the higher classes. But it was in vain to fret about it; and I soon found my level. I got most intimately acquainted with the wives of my husband's brethren of the quill and brief. Their characters were not a little entertaining. There was an absurdity in their manners, which tickled me to the very soul. These trumpery fine ladies held themselves up for something far above the common run. Well-a-day! said I to myself, every now and then, when they forgot the blue-bag: this is the way of the world! Every one fancies himself to be something vastly superior to his neighbour. I thought we actresses only did not know our places; women at the lower end of private life, as far as I see, are just as absurd in their pretensions. I should like, by way of a check upon their presumption, to propose a law, that family pictures and pedigrees should be hung up in every house. Were the situation left to the choice of the owner, the deuce is in it if these legal gentry would not cram their scrivening ancestors either into the cellar or the garret.

After four years passed in the holy state of wedlock, Signor Bernardo d'Astuto fell sick, and went the way of all flesh. We had no family. Between my settlement and what I was worth before, I found myself a well-endowed widow. I had, too, the reputation of being so; and on this report, a Silician gentleman, by name Colifichini, determined to stick in my skirts, and either ruin or marry me. The alternative was kindly left to my own choice. He was come from Palermo to see Spain, and, after having satisfied his curiosity, was waiting, as he said, at Valencia for an opportunity of taking his passage back to Sicily. The spark was not quite five-and-twenty; of an elegant, though diminutive

person; . . . . in short, his figure absolutely haunted me. He found the means of getting to the speech of me in private; and, I will own it to you frankly, I fell distractedly in love with him from the moment of our very first interview. On his part, the little knave flounced over head and ears in admiration of my charms. I do really think, God forgive me for it, that we should have been married out of hand, if the death of the attorney, whose funeral baked meats were scarcely cold enough to have furnished forth the marriage tables, would have allowed me to contract a new engagement at so short a warning. But since I had got into the matrimonial line, it was necessary that where the church makes a feast, the devil should not send cooks; I therefore took care always to season my nuptials to the palate of the world at large.

Thus did we agree to delay our coming together for a time, out of a tender regard to appearances. Colifichini, in the mean time, devoted all his attentions to me: his passion, far from languishing, seemed to become more a part of himself from day to day. The poor lad was not too flush of ready money. This struck my observation; and he was no longer at a loss for his little pocket expenses. Besides being very nearly twice his age, I recollected having laid the men under contribution in my younger days; so that I looked upon what I was then lavishing as a sort of restitution, which balanced my debtor and creditor account, and made me quits with my conscience. We waited, as patiently as our frailty would allow, for the period when widows may in decency so far surmount their grief as to try their luck again. When the happy morning rose, we presented ourselves before the altar, where we plighted our faith to each other by oaths the most solemn and binding. We then retired to my castle, where I may truly say that we lived for two years, less as husband and wife than as tender and unfettered lovers. But alas! such an union, so happy and sentimental, was not long to be the lot of humanity: a pleurisy carried off my dear Colifichini.

At this passage in her history, I interrupted my mother. Heyday! madam, your third husband despatched already? You must be a most deadly taking. What do you mean? answered she: is it for me to dispute the will of heaven, and lengthen the days parcelled out to every son of earth?

If I have lost three husbands, it was none of my fault. Two of them cost me many a salt tear. If I buried any with dry eyes, it was the attorney. As that was merely a match of interest, I was easily reconciled to the loss of him. But to return to Colifichini, I was going to tell you, that some months after his death, I had a mind to go and take possession of a country house near Palermo, which he had settled on me as a jointure, by our marriage contract. I took my passage for Sicily with my daughter; but we were taken on the voyage by Algerine corsairs. This city was our destination. Happily for us, you happened to be at the market where we were put up for sale. Had it been otherwise, we must have fallen into the hands of some barbarian purchaser, who would have used us ill; and we probably might have passed our whole life in slavery, nor would you ever have heard of us.

Such was my mother's story. To return to my own, gentlemen, I gave her the best apartment in my house, with the liberty of living after her own fashion; which was a circumstance very agreeable to her taste. She had a confirmed habit of loving, brought to such a system by so many repeated experiments, that it was impossible for her to do without either a gallant or a husband. At first she looked with favour on some of my slaves; but Hali Pegelin, a Greek renegado, who sometimes came and called upon us, soon drew all her glances on himself. She conceived a stronger passion for him than she had ever done for Colifichini; and such was her aptitude for pleasing the men, that she found the way to wind herself about the heart of this man also. I seemed as if unconscious of their good understanding; being then intent only on my return into Spain. The bashaw had already given me leave to fit out a vessel, for the purpose of sweeping the sea and committing acts of piracy. This armament was my sole object. Just a week before it was completed, I said to Lucinda: Madam, we shall take our leave of Algiers almost immediately; so that you will bid a long farewell to an abode which you cannot but detest.

My mother turned pale at these words, and stood silent and motionless. My surprise was extreme. What do I see? said I to her: whence comes it that you present such an image of terror and despair? My design was to fill you

with transport; but the effect of my intelligence seems only to overwhelm you with affliction. I thought to have been thanked for my welcome news; and hastened with eagerness to tell you that all is ready for our departure. Are you no longer in the mind to go back into Spain? No, my son; Spain no longer has any charms for me, answered my mother. It has been the scene of all my sorrows, and I have turned my back on it for ever. What do I hear? exclaimed I in an agony: ah! tell me rather, that it is a fatal passion which alienates you from your native country. Just heavens! what a change! When you landed here, every object that met your eyes was hateful to them, but Hali Pegelin has given another colour to your fancy. I do not deny it, replied Lucinda: I love that renegado, and mean to take him for my fourth husband. What an idea! interrupted I with horror: you, to marry a Mussulman! You forget yourself to be a Christian, or rather have hitherto been one only in name and not in heart. Ah! my dear mother, what a futurity do you present to my imagination! You are running headlong to your eternal ruin. You are going to do voluntarily, and from impure motives, what I have only done under the pressure of necessity.

I urged many other arguments in the same strain, to turn her aside from her purpose: but all my eloquence was wasted; she had made up her mind to her future destiny. Not satisfied with following the bent of her base inclinations, and leaving her son to go and live with this renegado, she had even formed a design to settle Beatrice in her own family. This I opposed with all my might and main. Ah! wretched Lucinda, said I, if nothing is capable of keeping you within the limits of your duty, at least rush on perdition alone; confine within yourself the fury which possesses you; cast not a young innocent headlong over a precipice, though you yourself may venture on the leap. Lucinda quitted my presence in moody silence. It struck me that a remnant of reason still enlightened her, and that she would not obstinately persevere in requiring her daughter to be given up to her. How little did I know of my mother! One of my slaves said to me two days afterwards: Sir, take care of yourself. A captive belonging to Pegelin has just let me into a secret, of which you cannot too soon avail

yourself. Your mother has changed her religion; and as a punishment upon you for having refused Beatrice to her wishes, it is her purpose to acquaint the bashaw with your flight. I could not for a moment doubt but what Lucinda was the woman to do just what my slave had said she would. The lady had given me manifold opportunities of studying her character; and it was sufficiently evident that by dint of playing bloody parts in tragedy, she had familiarized herself with the guilty scenes of real life. It would not in the least have gone against her nature to have got me burned alive; nor probably would she have been more affected by my exit after that fashion, than by the winding up of a dramatic tale.

The warning of my slave, therefore, was not to be neglected. My embarkation was hastened on. I took some Turks on board, according to the practice of the Algerine corsairs when going on a piratical expedition: but I engaged no more than was necessary to blind the eyes of jealousy, and weighed anchor from the port as soon as possible, with all my slaves and my sister Beatrice. You will do right to suppose, that I did not forget, in that moment of anxiety, to pack up my whole stock of money and jewels, amounting probably to the worth of six thousand ducats. When we were fairly out at sea, we began by securing the Turks. They were easily mastered, as my slaves outnumbered them. We had so favourable a wind, that we made the coast of Italy in a very short time. Without let or hindrance, we got into the harbour of Leghorn, where I thought the whole city must have come out to see us land. The father of my slave Azarini, either accidentally or from curiosity, happened to be among the gazers. He looked with all his eyes at my captives, as they came ashore; but though his object was to discover his lost son among the number, it was with little hope of so fortunate a result. But how powerful is the plea of nature! What transports, expressed by mutual embraces, followed the recognition of a tie so close, but so painfully interrupted for a time!

As soon as Azarini had acquainted his father who I was, and what brought me to Leghorn, the old man obliged me, as well as Beatrice, to accept of an apartment in his house. I shall pass over in silence the description of a thousand

ceremonies, necessary to be gone through, in order to my return into the bosom of the church; suffice it to say, that I foreswore Mahometanism with much more sincerity than I had pledged myself to it. After having entirely purged myself from my Algerine leaven, I sold my ship, and set all my slaves at liberty. As for the Turks, they were committed to prison at Leghorn, to be exchanged against Christians. I received kind attention in abundance from the Azarini family: indeed, the young man married my sister Beatrice, who, to speak the truth, was no bad match for him, being a gentleman's daughter, and inheriting the castle of Xerica, which my mother had taken care to let out to a rich farmer of Paterna, when she resolved upon her voyage to Sicily.

From Leghorn, after having staid there some time, I departed for Florence, a town I had a strong desire to see. I did not go thither without letters of recommendation. Azarini the father had connections at the grand duke's court, and introduced me to them as a Spanish gentleman related to his family. I tacked don to my name, in honest rivalry of impudence with other low Spaniards, who take up that travelling title of honour without compunction, when far enough from home to set detection at defiance. Boldly then did I dub myself Don Raphael; and appeared at court with suitable splendour, on the strength of what I had brought from Algiers, to keep my nobility from starving. The high personages, to whom old Azarini had written in my favour, gave out in their circle that I was a person of quality; so that with this testimony, and a natural knack I had of giving myself airs, the deuce must have been in it if I could not have passed muster for a man of some consequence. I soon got to be hand in glove with the principal nobility; and they presented me to the grand duke. I had the good fortune to make myself agreeable. It then became an object with me to pay court to that prince, and to study his humour. I sucked in with greedy ear all that his most experienced courtiers said about him, and by their conversation fathomed all his peculiarities. Among other things, he encouraged a play of wit; was fond of good stories and lively repartees. On this hint I formed myself. Every morning I wrote down in my pocket-book such anecdotes as I meant to rack off

in the course of the day. My stock was considerably extensive, so that I was a walking budget of balderdash. Yet even my estate in nonsense required economy, and I began to get out at elbows, so as to be reduced to borrow from myself, and mortgage my resources twenty times over: but when the shallow current of wit and wisdom was nearly at its summer drought, a torrent of matter-of-fact lies gave new force to the exhausted stream of quibble. Intrigues which never had been intrigued, and practical jokes which had never been played off, were the tools I worked with, and exactly to the level of the grand duke: nay, what often happens to dull dealers in inextinguishable vivacity, the mornings were spent in financiering those funds of conversation, which were to be drawn upon after dinner, as if from a perennial spring of preternatural wealth.

I had even the impudence to set up for a poet, and made my broken-winded muse trot to the praises of the prince. I allow candidly that the verses were execrable; but then they were quite good enough for their readers; and it remains a doubt whether, if they had been better, the grand duke would not have thrown them into the fire. They seemed to be just what he would have written upon himself. In short, it was impossible to miss the proper style on such a subject. But whatever might be my merit as a poet, the prince, by little and little, took such a liking to my person, as gave occasion of jealousy to his courtiers. They tried to find out who I was. This, however, was beyond their compass. All they could learn was, that I had been a renegado. This was whispered forthwith in the prince's ear, in the hopes of hurting me. Not that it succeeded: on the contrary, the grand duke one day commanded me to give him a faithful account of my adventures at Algiers. I obeyed; and the recital, without reserve on my part, contributed more than any other of my stories to his entertainment.

Don Raphael, said he, after I had ended my narrative, I have a real regard for you, and mean to give you a proof of it, which will place my sincerity beyond a doubt. Henceforth you are admitted into my most private confidence, as the first fruits of which, you are to know that one of my ministers has a wife, with whom I am in love. She is the most enchanting creature at court; but at the same time

the most impregnable. Shut up in her own household, exclusively attached to a husband who idolizes her, she seems to be ignorant of the combustion her charms have kindled in Florence. You will easily conceive the difficulty of such a conquest. And yet this epitome of loveliness, so deaf to all the whispers of common seduction, has sometimes listened to my sighs. I have found the means of speaking to her without witnesses. She is not unacquainted with my sentiments. I do not flatter myself with having warmed her into love; she has given me no reason to form so sweet a conjecture. Yet I will not despair of pleasing her by my constancy, and by the cautious conduct, even to mystery, which I take care to observe.

My passion for this lady, continued he, is known only to herself. Instead of pursuing my game wantonly, and overleaping the rights of my subjects like a true sovereign, I conceal from all the world the knowledge of my love. This delicacy seems due to Mascarini, the husband of my beloved mistress. His zeal and attachment to me, his services and honesty, oblige me to act in this business with the closest secrecy and circumspection. I will not plunge a dagger into the bosom of this ill-starred husband, by declaring myself a suitor to his wife. Would he might for ever be insensible, were it within possibility, to the secret flame which devours me: for I am persuaded that he would die of grief, were he to know the circumstances I have just now confided to you. I therefore veil my pursuit in impenetrable darkness; and have determined to make use of you, for the purpose of conveying to Lucretia the merit of the sacrifices my delicacy imposes on my feelings. Of these you shall be the interpreter. I doubt not but you will acquit yourself to a marvel of your commission. Contrive to be intimate with Mascarini; make a point of worming yourself into his friendship. Then an introduction to his family will be easy; and you will secure to yourself the liberty of conversing freely with his wife. This is what I require from you, and what I feel assured that you will execute with all the dexterity and discretion necessary to so delicate an undertaking.

I promised the grand duke to do my utmost, in furtherance of his good opinion, and in aid of his success with the object of his desires. I kept my word without loss of time.

No pains were spared to get into Mascarini's good graces; and the design was not difficult to accomplish. Delighted to find his friendship sought by a man possessing the affections of the prince, he advanced half way to meet my overtures. His house was always open to me, my intercourse with his lady was unrestrained; and I have no hesitation in affirming my measures to have been taken so well, as to have precluded the slightest suspicion of the embassy intrusted to my management. It is true, he had but a small share of the Italian jealousy, relying as he did on the virtue of his Lucretia; so that he often shut himself up in his closet, and left me alone with her. I entered at once into the pith and marrow of my subject. The grand duke's passion was my topic with the lady; and I told her that the motive of my visits was only to plead for that prince. She did not seem to be over head and ears in love with him; and yet, methought, vanity forbade her to frown decisively on his addresses. She took a pleasure in listening to his sighs, without sighing in concert. A certain propriety of heart she had; but then she was a woman; and it was obvious that her rigour was giving way insensibly to the triumphant image of a sovereign, bound in the fetters of her resistless charms. In short, the prince had good reason to flatter himself that he might dispense with the ill-breeding of a Tarquin, and yet bend Lucretia to a compliance with his longings. An incident, however, the most unexpected in the annals of romance, blasted his flattering prospects; in what manner you shall hear.

I am naturally free and easy with the women. This constitutional assurance, whether a blessing or a curse, was ripened into inveterate habit among the Turks. Lucretia was a pretty woman. I forgot that I was courting by proxy, and assumed the tone of a principal. Nothing could exceed the warmth and gallantry with which I offered my services to the lady. Far from appearing offended at my boldness, or silencing me by a resentful answer, she only said with a sarcastic smile: Own the truth, Don Raphael; the grand Duke has pitched upon a very faithful and zealous agent. You serve him with an integrity not sufficiently to be commended. Madam, said I in the same strain, let us not examine things with too much nicety. A truce, I beseech you, with moral discussions;

they are not of my element: good honest passion tallies better with our natures. I do not believe myself, after all, the first prince's confidant who has ousted his master in an affair of gallantry; your great lords have often dangerous rivals, in more humble messengers than myself. That may be, replied Lucretia: but a haughty temper stands with me in the place of virtue, and no one under the degree of a prince shall ever sully these charms. Regulate your behaviour accordingly, added she in a tone of serious severity, and let us change the subject. I willingly bury your presumption in oblivion, provided you never hold similar discourse to me again: if you do, you may repent of it.

Though this was a comment of some importance on my text, and ought to have been heedfully conned over, it was no bar to my still entertaining Mascarini's wife with my passion. I even pressed her with more importunity than heretofore, for a kind consent to my tender entreaties: and was rash enough to feel my ground, by some little personal freedoms. The lady then, offended at my words, and still more at my Mahometan quips and cranks, gave a complete set down to my assurance. She threatened to acquaint the grand duke with my impertinence; and declared she would make a point of his punishing me as I deserved. These menaces bristled up my spirit in return. My love turned at once into hatred, and determined me to revenge myself for the contempt with which Lucretia had treated me. I went in quest of her husband; and after having bound him by oath not to betray me, I informed him of his wife's correspondence with the prince, and failed not to represent her as distractedly enamoured of him, by way of heightening the interest of the scene. The minister, lest the plot should become too intricately entangled, shut his wife up, without any law but his own will, in a secret apartment, where he placed her under the strict guard of confidential persons. While she was thus kept at bay by the watch-dogs of jealousy, who prevented her from acquainting the grand duke with her situation, I announced to that prince, with a melancholy air, that he must think no longer of Lucretia. I told him that Mascarini had doubtless discovered all, since he had taken it into his head to keep a guard over his wife; that I

could not conceive what had induced him to suspect me, as I flattered myself with having always behaved according to the most approved rules of discretion in such cases. The lady might, I suggested, have been beforehand, and owned all to her husband; and had perhaps, in concert with him, suffered herself to be immured, in order to lie hid from a pursuit so dangerous to her virtue. The prince appeared deeply afflicted at my relation. I was not unmoved by his distress, and repented more than once of what I had done; but it was too late to retract. Besides, I must acknowledge, a spiteful joy tingled in my veins, when I meditated on the distressed condition of the disdainful fair, who had spurned my vows.

I was feeding with impunity on the pleasure of revenge, so palatable to all the world, but most of all to Spaniards, when one day the grand duke, chatting with five or six nobles of his court and myself, said to us: In what manner would you judge it fitting for a man to be punished, who should have abused the confidence of his prince, and designed to step in between him and his mistress? The best way, said one of the courtiers, would be to have him torn to pieces by four horses. Another gave it as his verdict, that he should be soundly beaten, till he died under the blows of the executioner. The most tender-hearted and merciful of these Italians, with comparative lenity towards the culprit, wished only just to admonish him of his fault, by throwing him from the top of a tower to the bottom. And Don Raphael, resumed the grand duke, after a pause, what is his opinion? The Spaniards, in all likelihood, would improve upon our Italian severity, in a case of such aggravated treachery.

I fully understood, as you may well suppose, that Mascarini had not kept his oath, or that his wife had devised the means of acquainting the prince with what had passed between her and me. My countenance sufficiently betokened my inward agitation. But for all that, suppressing as well as I could my rising emotion and alarm, I replied to the grand duke in a steady tone of voice—My lord, the Spaniards are more generous; under such circumstances, they would pardon the unworthy betrayer of his trust, and by that act of unmerited goodness would kindle in his soul an everlasting abhorrence of his own villany. Yes, truly,

said the prince, and I feel in my own breast a similar spirit of forbearance. Let the traitor then be pardoned; since I have myself only to blame for having given my confidence to a man of whom I had no knowledge, but, on the contrary, much ground of suspicion, according to the current of common report. Don Raphael, added he, my revenge shall be confined to this single interdict. Quit my dominions immediately, and never appear again in my presence. I withdrew in all haste, less hurt at my disgrace, than delighted to have got off so cheaply. The very next day I embarked in a Barcelona ship, just setting sail from the port of Leghorn on its return.

At this period of his history I interrupted Don Raphael to the following effect. For a man of shrewdness, methinks you were not a little off your guard, in trusting yourself at Florence, for even so short a time, after having discovered the prince's love of Lucretia to Mascarini. You might well have foreboded that the grand duke would not be long in getting to the knowledge of your duplicity. Your observation is very just, answered the well-matched son of so eccentric a mother as Lucinda: and for that reason, not trusting to the minister's promise of screening me from his master's indignation, it had been my intention to disappear without taking leave.

I got safe to Barcelona, continued he, with the remnant of the wealth I had brought from Algiers; but the greater part had been squandered at Florence in enacting the Spanish gentleman. I did not stay long in Catalonia. Madrid was the dear place of my nativity, and I had a longing desire to see it again, which I satisfied as soon as possible; for mine was not a temper to stand parleying with its own inclinations. On my arrival in town, I chanced to take up my abode in a ready-furnished lodging, where dwelt a lady, by name Camilla. Though at some distance from her teens, she was a very spirit-stirring creature, as Signor Gil Blas will bear me out in saying; for he fell in with her at Valladolid nearly about the same time. Her parts were still more extraordinary than her beauty; and never had a lady with a character to let a happier talent of inveigling fools to their ruin. But she was not like those selfish jilts, who put out the cullability of their lovers to usury. The pillage of the plodding merchant, or the grave family man,

was squandered upon the first gambler or prize-fighter who happened to find his way into her frolicsome fancy.

We loved one another from the first moment, and the conformity of our tempers bound us so closely together, that we soon lived on the footing of joint property. The amount, in sober sadness, was little better than a cypher, and a few good dinners more reduced it to that ignoble negative of number. We were each of us thinking, as the deuce would have it, of our mutual pleasures, without profiting in the least by those happy dispositions of ours for living at the expense of other folks. Want at last gave a keener edge to our wits, which indulgence had blunted. My dear Raphael, said Camilla, let us carry the war into the enemy's quarters, if you love me; for while we are as faithful as turtles, we are as foolish; and fall into our own snare, instead of laying it for the unwary. You may get into the head and heart of a rich widow; I may conjure myself into the good graces of some old nobleman: but as for this ridiculous fidelity, it brings no grist to the mill. Excellent Camilla, answered I, you are beforehand with me. I was going to make the very same proposal. It exactly meets my ideas, thou paragon of morality. Yes; the better to maintain our mutal fire, let us forage for substantial fuel. As good may always be extracted out of evil, those infidelities which are the bane of other loves, shall be the triumph of ours.

On the basis of this treaty we took the field. At first, there was much cry but little wool; for we had no luck at finding cullies. Camilla met with nothing but pretty fellows, with vanity in their hearts, tinsel on their backs, and not a maravedi in their pockets; my ladies were all of a kidney to levy, rather than to pay contributions. As love left us in the lurch, we paid our devotions at the shrine of knavery. With the zeal of martyrs to a new religion, did we encounter the frowns of the civil power, whose myrmidons, as like the devil in their nature as their office, were ordered on the look-out after us; but the alguazil, with all the good qualities of which the corregidor inherited the contraries, gave us time to make our escape out of Madrid, for the good of the trade and a small sum of money. We took the road to Valladolid, meaning to set up in that town. I rented a house for myself and Camilla, who passed for my

sister, to avoid evil tongues. At first we kept a tight rein over our speculative talents, and began by reconnoitring the ground before we determined on our plan of operations.

One day a man accosted me in the street, with a very civil salutation, to this effect—Signor Don Raphael, do you recollect my face? I answered in the negative. Then I have the advantage of you, replied he, for yours is perfectly familiar to me. I have seen you at the court of Tuscany, where I was then in the grand duke's guards. It is some months since I quitted that prince's service. I came into Spain with an Italian, who will not discredit the politics of his country: we have been at Valladolid these three weeks. Our residence is with a Castilian and a Galician, who are, without dispute, two of the best creatures in the world. We live together by the sweat of our brows, and the labour of our hands. Our fare is not abstemious, nor have we made any vow against the temptations of a life about the court. If you will make one of our party, my brethren will be glad of your company; for you always seemed to me a man of spirit, above all vulgar prejudices, in short, a monk of our order.

Such frankness from this arch-scoundrel was met halfway by mine. Since you talk to me with so winning a candour, said I, you deserve that I should be equally explicit with you. In good truth I am no novice in your ritual; and if my modesty would allow me to be the hero of my own tale, you would be convinced that your compliments were not lavished on an unworthy subject. But enough of my own commendations; proceed we to the point in question. With all possible desire to become a member of your body, I shall neglect no opportunity of proving my title to that distinction. I had no sooner told this sharper at all points, that I would agree to swell the number of his gang, than he conducted me to their place of meeting, and introduced me in proper form. It was on this occasion that I first saw the renowned Ambrose de Lamela. These gentlemen catechised me in the religion of coveting my neighbour's goods, and doing as I would not be done by. They wanted to discern whether I played the villain on principle, or had only some little practical dexterity; but I shewed them tricks which they did not know to be on the cards, and yet acknowledged to be better than their

own. They were still deeper lost in admiration, when in cool disdain of manual artifice, as an every-day effort of ingenuity, I maintained my prowess in such combinations of roguery as require an inventive brain and a solid judgment to support them. In proof of these pretensions, I related the adventure of Jerome de Moyadas; and on this single specimen of my parts, they conceived my genius of so high an order, as to elect me by common consent for their leader. Their choice was fully justified by a host of slippery devices, of which I was the master-wheel, the corner-stone, or according to whatever other metaphor in mechanics you may best express the soul of a conspiracy. When we had occasion for a female performer to heighten the interest, Camilla was sent upon the stage, and played up to admiration in the parts she had to perform.

Just at that period, our friend and brother Ambrose was seized with a longing to see his native country once more. He went for Galicia with an assurance that we might reckon on his return. The visit cured his patriotic sickness. As he was on the road back, having halted at Burgos to strike some stroke of business, an innkeeper of his acquaintance introduced him into the service of Signor Gil Blas de Santillane, not forgetting to instruct him thoroughly in the state of that gentleman's affairs. Signor Gil Blas, pursued Don Raphael, addressing his discourse to me, you know in what manner we eased you of your moveables in a ready-furnished lodging at Valladolid; and you must doubtless have suspected Ambrose to have been the principal contriver of that exploit, and not without reason. On his coming into town, he ran himself out of breath to find us, and laid open every particular of your situation, so that the associated swindlers had nothing to do but to build on his foundation. But you are unacquainted with the consequences of that adventure; you shall therefore have them on my authority. Your portmanteau was made free with by Ambrose and myself. We also took the liberty of riding your mules in the direction of Madrid, not dropping the least hint to Camilla nor to our partners in iniquity,who must have partaken in some measure of your feelings in the morning, at finding their glory shorn of two such beams.

On the second day we changed our purpose. Instead of

going to Madrid, whence I had not sallied forth without an urgent motive, we passed by Zebreros, and continued our journey as far as Toledo. Our first care, in that town, was to dress ourselves in the genteelest style; then assuming the character of two brothers from Galicia on our travels of mere curiosity, we soon got acquainted in the most respectable circles. I was so much in the habit of acting the man of fashion, as not easily to be detected; and as the generality of people are blinded by a free expenditure, we threw dust into the eyes of all the world, by the elegant entertainments to which we invited the ladies. Among the women who frequented our parties, there was one not indifferent to me. She appeared more beautiful than Camilla, and certainly much younger. I inquired who she was; and learned that her name was Violante, and that she was married to an ungrateful spark, who soon grew weary of her chaste caresses, and was running after those of a prostitute, with whom he was in love. There was no need to say any more, to determine me on enthroning Violante the sovereign lady and mistress of my thoughts and affections.

She was not long in coming to the knowledge of her conquest. I began by following her about from place to place, and playing a hundred monkey tricks to instil into her comprehension, that nothing would please me better than the office of making her amends for the ill usage of her husband. The pretty creature ruminated on my proffered kindness, and to such purpose as to let me know in the end that my labour was not wasted on an ungrateful soil. I received a note from her in answer to several I had transmitted by one of those convenient old dowagers, in such high request throughout Spain and Italy. The lady sent me word that her husband supped with his mistress every evening, and did not return home till very late. It was impossible to mistake the meaning of this. On that very night I planted myself under Violante's windows, and engaged her in a most tender conversation. At the moment of parting, it was settled between us that every evening at the same hour, we should meet and converse on the same everlasting topic, without gainsaying any such other acts of gallantry as might safely be submitted to the peering eye of day.

Hitherto Don Balthazar, as Violante's husband was

called, had no reason to complain of his forehead; but I was a natural philosopher, and little satisfied with metaphysical endearments. One evening, therefore, I repaired under my lady's windows, with the design of telling her that there was an end of life and everything, if we could not come together on more accommodating terms than from the balcony to the street; for I had never yet been able to get into the house. Just as I got thither, a man came within sight, apparently with the view of dogging me. In fact, it was the husband returning earlier than usual from his precious bit of amusement; but observing a male nuisance near his nunnery, instead of coming straight home, he walked backwards and forwards in the street. It was almost a moot point with me what I ought to do. At last, I resolved on accosting Don Balthazar, though neither of us had the slightest knowledge of each other. Noble gentleman, said I, you would do me a most particular favour by leaving the street vacant to me for this one night; I would do as much for you another time. Sir, answered he, I was just going to make the same request to you. I am on the look-out after a girl, over whom a confounded fellow of a brother keeps watch and ward like a gaoler; and she lives not twenty yards from this place. I could wish to carry on my project without a witness. We have the means, replied I, of attaining both our ends without clashing; for the lady of my desires lives there, added I, pointing to his own house. We had better even help one another, in case of being attacked. With all my heart, resumed he; I will go to my appointment, and we will make common cause if need be. Under this pretence he went away, but only to observe me the more narrowly; and the darkness of the night favoured his doing so without detection.

As for me, I made up to Violante's balcony in the simplicity of my heart. She soon heard my signal, and we began our usual parley. I was not remiss in pressing the idol of my worship to grant me a private interview in some safe and practicable place. She was rather coy to my entreaties, as favours hardly earned are the higher valued: at length she took a letter out of her pocket, and flung it down to me. There, said she, you will find in that scrap of paper the promise of what you have teased me so long about. She then withdrew, as the hour approached when

her husband usually came home. I put the note up carefully, and went towards the place where Don Balthazar had told me that his business lay. But that staunch husband, with the sagacity of an old sportsman where his own wife was the game, came more than half-way to meet me, with this question: Well, good sir, are you satisfied with your happy fortunes? I have reason to be so, answered I. And as for yourself, what have you done? has the blind god befriended you? Alas! quite the contrary, replied he: that impertinent brother, who takes such liberties with my beauty, thought fit to come back from his country house, whence we hugged ourselves as sure that he would not return till to-morrow. This infernal chance has put all my soft and soothing pleasures out of tune.

Nothing could exceed the mutual pledges of lasting friendship which were exchanged between Don Balthazar and me. To draw the cords the closer, we made an appointment for the next morning in the great square. This plotting gentleman, after we had parted, betook himself to his own house, without giving Violante at all to understand that he knew more about her than she wished him. On the following day he was punctual in the great square, and I was not five minutes after him. We exchanged greetings with all the warmth of old friendship; but it was a vapour to mislead on his part, though a spark of heavenly flame on mine. In the course of conversation, this hypocritical Don Balthazar palmed upon me a fictitious confidence, respecting his intrigue with the lady about whom he had been speaking the night before. He put together a long story he had been manufacturing on that subject, and all this to hook me in to tell him, in return, by what means I had got acquainted with Violante. The snare was too subtle for me to escape; I owned all with the innocence of a new-born babe. I did not even stick at shewing the note I had received from her, and read the contents, to the following purport: "I am going to-morrow to dine with Donna Inez. You know where she lives. It is in the house of that confidential friend that I mean to pass some happy moments along with you. It is impossible longer to refuse a boon your patience has so well merited."

Here indeed, said Don Balthazar, is an epistle which

promises to crown all your wishes at once. I congratulate you beforehand on your approaching happiness. He could not help fidgeting and wriggling a little, while he talked in these terms of his own household; but all his hitches and wry faces passed off, and my eyes were as fast sealed as ever. I was so full of anticipating titillations, as not to think of noticing my new friend, who was obliged to get off as fast as he could, for fear of betraying his agitation in my presence. He ran to acquaint his brother-in-law with this strange occurrence. I know not what might pass between them: it is only certain that Don Balthazar happened to knock at Donna Inez's door, just when I was at that lady's house with Violante. We were warned who it was, and I escaped by a back door exactly as he went in at the front. As soon as I had got safe off, the women, whom the unexpected visit of this troublesome husband had disconcerted a little, recovered their presence of mind, and with it so large a stock of assurance, as to stand the brunt of his attack, and put him to a nonplus in ascertaining whether they had hid me or smuggled me out. I cannot exactly tell you what he said to Donna Inez and his wife; nor do I believe that history will ever furnish any authentic particulars of the squabble.

In the mean time, without suspecting yet how completely I was gulled by Don Balthazar, I sallied forth with curses in my mouth, and returned to the great square, where I had appointed Lamela to meet me. But no Lamela was there. He also had his little snug parties, and the scoundrel fared better than his comrade. As I was waiting for him, I caught a glimpse of my treacherous associate, with a knowing smile upon his countenance. He made up to me, and inquired, with a hearty laugh, what news of my assignation with my nymph, under the convenient roof of Donna Inez. I cannot conceive, said I, what evil spirit, jealous of my joys, takes delight to nip them in their blossom: but after we had embraced, kissed, protested, and, as it were, spoke the prologue of our comedy, comes the peaking cornuto of a husband (the furies fly away with him), and knocks at the door in the instant of our encounter. There was nothing to be done but to secure my retreat as fast as possible. So I got out at a back door, sending to all the inhabitants of hell and its suburbs the jealous knave, who

was so uncivil as to search another lady's house for his own horns. I am sorry you sped so ill-favouredly, exclaimed Don Balthazar, who was chuckling with inward satisfaction at my disappointment. What a mechanical rogue of a husband! I would advise you to shew no mercy to the wittol. Oh! you need not teach me how to predominate over such a peasant, replied I. Take my word for it, a new quarter shall be added to his coat of arms this very night. His wife, when I went away, told me not to be faint-hearted for such a trifle; but to place myself without fail under her windows at an earlier hour than usual, for she was resolved to let me into the house; and as a precaution against all accidents, she begged me to bring two or three friends in my train, for fear of a surprise. What a discreet and inventive lady! said he. I should have no objection to being of your party. Ah! my dear friend, exclaimed I, out of wits with joy, and throwing my arms about Don Balthazar's neck, how infinitely you will oblige me! I will do more, resumed he; I know a young man, armed like another Cæsar, for either field of love or war; he shall be of our number, and you may then rely boldly on the sufficiency of your escort.

I knew not in what words to thank this seeming friend, so that my gratitude might be equivalent to his zeal. To make short of the matter, I accepted his proffered aid. Our meeting was fixed under Violante's balcony early in the evening, and we parted. He went in quest of his brother-in-law, who was the hero in question. As for me, I walked about all day with Lamela, who had no more misgivings than myself, though somewhat astonished at the warmth with which Don Balthazar engaged in my interests. We slipt our own necks completely into the noose. I own this was mere infatuation on our parts, whose natural instinct ought to have warned us of a halter. When I thought it proper time to present myself under Violante's windows, Ambrose and I took care to be armed with small swords. There we found the husband of my fair dame and another man, waiting for us with a very determined air. Don Balthazar accosted me, and introducing his brother-in-law, said: Sir, this is the brave officer whose prowess I have extolled so highly to you. Make the best of your way into your mistress's house, and let no fear of the consequences

be any bar to the enjoyment of the most rapturous human bliss.

After a mutual interchange of compliments, I knocked at Violante's door. It was opened by a kind of duenna. In I went, and without looking back after what was passing behind me, made the best of my way to the lady's room. While I was paying her my preliminary civilities, the two cut-throats, who had followed me into the house, and had banged the door after them so violently that Ambrose was left in the street, made their appearance. You may well suppose that then was the appeal to arms. They both fell upon me at the same time, but I shewed them some play. I kept them engaged on either side so fiercely, that they were sorry perhaps not to have taken a safer road to their revenge. The husband was run through the body. His brother-in-law, seeing him on his travels to the shades below, made the best of his way to the door, which the duenna and Violante had opened, to make their escape while we were fighting. I ran after him into the street, where I met with Lamela once more, who by dint of not being able to get a word out of the women, running as they did for their very lives, did not know exactly what he was to divine from the infernal noise he had just heard. We got back to our inn. After packing up what was best worth taking with us, we mounted our mules, and got out of town, without waiting for daybreak or fear of robbers.

It was sufficiently clear that this business was not likely to be without its consequences, and that a hue and cry would be set up in Toledo, which we should act like wise men to anticipate by a retreat. We stayed the night at Villarubia. At the inn where we put up, some time after our arrival, there alighted a tradesman of Toledo on his way to Segorba. We clubbed our suppers. He related to us the tragical catastrophe of Violante's husband; and so far was he from suspecting us of being parties concerned, that we inquired into particulars with the curious indifference of common newsmongers. Gentlemen, said he, just as I was setting out this morning, the report of this melancholy event was handed about. Every one was on the hunt after Violante; and they say that the corregidor, a relation of Don Balthazar, is determined on sparing no pains

to discover the perpetrators of this murder. So much for my knowledge of the business.

The corregidor of Toledo and his police gave me very little uneasiness. But for fear of the worst, I determined to precipitate my retreat from New Castile. It occurred to me that Violante, when hunted out of her hiding-place, would turn informer, and in that case she might give such a description of my person to the clerks in office, as might enable them to put their scouts upon a right scent. For this reason, on the following day we struck out of the high road, as a measure of safety. Fortunately Lamela was acquainted with three-fourths of Spain, and knew by what cross paths we could get securely into Arragon. Instead of going straight to Cuença, we threaded the defiles of the mountains overhanging that town, and arrived, by ways with which my guide was well acquainted, at a grotto looking very much like a hermitage. In fact, it was the very place whither you came yesterday evening to petition me for an asylum.

While I was reconnoitring the neighbourhood, which presented a most delicious landscape to my view, my companion said to me, It is six years since I travelled this way. At that time the grotto before us afforded a retreat to an old hermit who entertained me charitably. He made me fare as he did. I remember that he was a holy man, and talked in such a strain as almost to wean me from the vices and follies of this nether world. He may possibly be still living; I will ascertain whether it be so or not. With these words in his mouth, Ambrose, under the influence of natural curiosity, alighted from his mule, and went into the hermitage. He remained there some minutes, and then returned, calling after me, and saying, Come hither, Don Raphael, come and bear witness to a most affecting event. I dismounted immediately. We tied our mules to a tree, and I followed Lamela into the grotto, where I descried an old anchoret stretched at his length upon a couch, pale and at the point of death. A white beard, very thick, hung down to his middle, and he held a large rosary, most piously ornamented, in his clasped hands. At the noise which we made in coming near him, he opened his eyes, upon which death had already begun to lay his leaden hand; and after having looked at us for a moment said,

" Whosoever you are, my brethren, profit by the spectacle which presents itself to your observation. I have seen out forty years in the world, and sixty in this solitude. But mark! At this eternal crisis, the time I have devoted to my pleasures seems an age, and that on the contrary which has been sacred to repentance, but a minute! Alas! I fear lest the austerities of brother Juan should be found light in the balance with the sins of the licentiate Don Juan de Solis."

No sooner were these words out of his mouth than he breathed his last. We were struck by the solemn scene. Objects of this kind always make some impression even on the greatest libertines; but our serious thoughts were of no long duration. We soon forgot what he had been saying to us, and began making an inventory of what the hermitage contained; an employment which was not oppressively laborious, since the household furniture extended no further than what you remarked in the grotto. Brother Juan was not only in ill-furnished lodgings; his kitchen, too, was in a very rustic plight. All the store laid in consisted of some small nuts and some pieces of crusty barley bread as hard as flint, which had all the appearance of having been impregnable to the gums of the venerable man. I specify his gums, because we looked for his teeth, and found they had all dropped out. The whole arrangement of this solitary abode, every object that met our eyes, made us look upon this good anchoret as a pattern of sanctity. One thing only staggered us in our opinion. We opened a paper folded in the form of a letter, and lying upon the table, wherein he besought the person who should read the contents, to carry his rosary and sandals to the bishop of Cuença. We could not make out in what spirit this modern recluse of the desert could aim at making such a present to his bishop, It seemed to us to tread somewhat on the heels of his humility, and to savour of one who was a candi date for a niche in the calendar. Though indeed it might be, that there was nothing in it but a simple supposition, that the bishop was such another as himself; but whether his ignorance was really so extreme, I shall not pretend to decide.

In talking over this subject, a very pleasant idea occurred to Lamela. Let us take up our abode, said he, in this holy

retreat. The disguise of hermits will become us. Brother Juan must be laid quietly in the earth. You shall personate him; and for myself, in the character of brother Antony, I will go and see what is to be done in the neighbouring towns and villages. Besides that we shall be too cunningly ensconced for the prying curiosity of the corregidor, since it is not to be supposed that he will think of coming hither to look for us, I have some good connections at Cuença, which may be of essential service to us. I fell in with this odd whim, not so much for the reasons given me by Ambrose, as in compliance with the humour of the thing, and as it were to play a part in a dramatic piece. We made an excavation in the ground at about thirty or forty yards from the grotto, and buried the old anchoret there without any pompous rites, after having stripped him of his wardrobe, which consisted of a single gown tied round the middle with a leathern girdle. We likewise despoiled him of his beard to make me an artificial one: and finally, after his interment, we took possession of the hermitage.

The first day our table was but meanly served; the provisions of the deceased were all we had to feed on; but on the following morning, before sunrise, Lamela set off to sell the two mules at Toralva, and returned in the evening, laden with provisions and other articles which he had purchased. He brought everything necessary to metamorphose us completely. For himself he had provided a gown of coarse dark cloth, and a little red horse-hair beard, so ingeniously appended to his ears, that one would have sworn it had been natural. There is not a cleverer fellow in the universe for a frolic. Brother Juan's beard was also new-modelled, and adapted to the plumpness of my face. My brown woollen cap completed the masquerade. In fact, nothing was wanting to make us pass for what we were not. Our equipage was so ludicrously out of character, that we could not look at one another without laughing, under a garb so diametrically at variance with our general complexion. With brother Juan's mantle, I caught and kept his rosary and sandals; taking the liberty of borrowing them for the time being from the bishop of Cuença.

We had already been three days in the hermitage, with-

out having been interrupted by a living soul; but on the fourth, two countrymen came into the grotto. They brought bread, cheese, and onions, for the deceased, whom they supposed to be still living. I threw myself on our miserable couch as soon as they made their appearance; and it was not difficult to impose on them. Besides that it was too dark to distinguish my features accurately, I imitated the voice of brother Juan, whose last words I had heard, to the best of my ability. They had no suspicion of the trick, though a good deal surprised at finding another hermit there. Lamela, taking advantage of their stupid wonder, said in a canting tone: My brethren, be not astonished at seeing me in this solitude. I have quitted a hermitage of my own in Arragon, to come hither and be a companion to the venerable and edifying brother Juan, who, at his advanced age, wants a yoke-fellow to administer to his necessities. The rustics lavished their clumsy panegyrics on the charity of Ambrose, and congratulated themselves that they might triumph over their neighbours, and boast of two holy personages residing in their country.

Lamela, laden with a large wallet which he had not forgotten among the number of his purchases, went for the first time to reconnoitre the town of Cuença, which is but a very short distance from the hermitage. With a mortified exterior, by which nature had dubbed him for a cheat, and the art of making that natural deception go as far as possible, by a most hypocritical and factitious array of features, he could not fail to play upon the feelings of the charitable and humane, and those whom heaven has blessed with affluence. His knapsack bore testimony to the extravagance of their pious liberalities. Master Ambrose, said I on his return, I congratulate you on your happy knack at softening the souls of all good Christians. As we hope to be saved! one would suppose that you had been a mendicant friar among the Capuchins. I have done something else besides bringing in food for the convent, answered he. You must know that I have ferreted out a certain lass called Barbara, with whom I used to flirt formerly. She is as much altered as any of us: for she also has addicted herself to a godly life. She forms a coterie with two or three other sanctified dames, who are

an example to the faithful in public, and flounce over head and ears in every sort of private vice. She did not know me again at first. What then, mistress Barbara, said I, is it possible that you should have discharged one of your oldest friends from your remembrance, your servant Ambrose? As I am a true Christian, Signor de Lamela, exclaimed she, I never thought to have turned you up in such a garb as that. By what transformation are you become a hermit? This is more than I can tell you just now, rejoined I. The particulars are rather long; but I will come to-morrow evening and satisfy your curiosity. Nay, more; I will bring brother Juan, my companion, along with me. Brother Juan, interrupted she, the venerable hermit who has taken up his saintly residence near this town? You do not know what you are saying; he is supposed to be be more than a hundred years old. It is very true, said I, that he was of that age some little while ago; but time, in deference to his sanctity, has gone backward with him; and he is grown considerably younger within these few days. He is at present just about my turn of life. Say you so! Then let us have him too, replied Barbara. I perœive there is something more in this mystery than the church will be able to explain.

We did not miss our appointment with these whited sepulchres on the following night. To make our reception the more agreeable, they had laid out a sumptuous entertainment. Off went our beards and cowls, and vestments of mortification; and without any squeamishness we confessed our birth, education, and real character, to these sisters in hypocrisy. On their part, for fear of being behindhand with us in freedom from prejudice, they fairly let us see of what pretended religionists are capable, when they drop the veil of the sanctuary, and exhibit their unmanufactured faces. We spent almost the whole night at table, and got back to our grotto but a moment before daybreak. We were not long in repeating our visit; or, if the truth must be told, it was nightly for three months; till we had ate up more than two-thirds of our ways and means in the company of these delicate creatures. But an unsuccessful candidate for their favour got wind of our proceedings, and prated of our whereabout in the ear of justice, which was to have been in motion towards the hermitage this very

day, to lay hold of our persons. Yesterday Ambrose, while picking up eleemosynaries at Cuença, stumbled upon one of our whining sisterhood, who gave him a note, with this caution: A female friend of mine has written me this letter, which I was going to send to you by a man on purpose. Shew it to brother Juan, and regulate your proceedings accordingly. It was this very note, gentlemen, that Lamela gave me in your presence, which occasioned us to take so abrupt a leave of our solitary dwelling.

CHAPTER II

DON RAPHAEL'S CONSULTATION WITH HIS COMPANY, AND THEIR ADVENTURES AS THEY WERE PREPARING TO LEAVE THE WOOD

WHEN Don Raphael had finished the narrative of his adventurous life, which, with all the other qualities of a romance, had the tediousness, Don Alphonso, according to the laws of good breeding, swore himself black in the face that he had been prodigiously entertained. After the usual exchange of compliments, Signor Ambrose put in his oar, with an admonitory hint to the partner of his exploits and peregrinations. Consider, Don Raphael, that the sun is setting. It would not be amiss, methinks, to take counsel on what we are to do. You are in the right, answered his comrade, we must determine on the place of our destination. For my own part, replied Lamela, I am of opinion that we should get upon the road again without loss of time, reach Requena to-night, and enter upon the territory of Valencia to-morrow, where we will go to work full tilt at our old trade. I have some prognosticating twitches, which tell me that we shall strike some good strokes in that quarter. His colleague, from ample experience of his infallibility in such prophecies, voted on his side of the question. As for Don Alphonso and myself, having nothing to do but to follow the lead of these two worthy gentlemen, we waited, in silent acquiescence, the issue of this momentous debate.

Thus it was determined that we should take the direction of Requena; and all hands were piped to make the necessary arrangements. We made our meal after the same

fashion as in the morning, and the horse was laden with the bottle, and with the remnant of our provisions. After a time, the approach of night seemed to promise us that darkness so friendly, and even so necessary, to the safety of our retreat; and we were beginning our march through the wood: but before we had gone a hundred paces, a light among the trees gave us a subject of anxious speculation. What can be the meaning of that? said Don Raphael; these surely must be blood-hounds of the police from Cuença, uncoupled and eager for the sport, with a fresh scent of us in this forest, and in full cry after their game. I am of a very different opinion, said Ambrose; they are more likely to be benighted travellers taking shelter in the thicket till daybreak. But there is no trusting to conjecture: I will examine into the real truth. Stay you here all three of you; I will be back again instantly. No sooner said than done; he stole, just as if he had been used to it, towards the light, which was not far off; no brute or human thief of forest or city could have done it better. With a gentle removal of the leaves and branches which obstructed his passage, the whole scene was laid open to his silent contemplation; and it afforded sufficient food. On the grass, round about a lighted candle with a clod for its candlestick, were seated four men, just finishing a meat pie, and hugging a pretty large bottle, which was at its last gasp. after having sustained their alternate embraces for successive rounds. At some paces from these gentry, he espied a lady and gentleman tied to the trees, and a little further off, a carriage with two mules richly caparisoned. He determined at once in his own mind that the fellows carousing on the ground were banditti; and the tenor of their talk assured him that he had not belied their trade by his conjecture. The four cut-throats all avowed a like desire of possessing the female who had fallen into their hands; and they were proposing to draw lots for her. Lamela, having made himself master of the business, came back to us, and gave an exact account of all he had seen and heard.

My friends, said Don Alphonso on his recital, that lady and gentleman whom the robbers have tied to trees, are probably persons of the first condition. Shall we suffer scoundrels like these to triumph over their honour and take

away their lives? Put yourselves under my direction: let us assail the desperate outlaws, and they will perish under our attack. With all my heart, said Don Raphael. It is all one to me, I had just as soon engage on the right side as on the wrong. Ambrose, for his part, protested that he wished for nothing better than to lend a hand in so moral an enterprise, as it promised to combine much profit with some share of honour. And indeed, if a man may speak a good word for himself, danger stood better recommended than usual to my comprehension; all the boiling courage of knighthood, pledged up to the knuckles or the chin on the behalf of female innocence, was oozing out at every pore of this chivalrous person. But, if we are to state facts in the spirit of history rather than of romance, the danger was more in imagination than in reality. Lamela having brought us word that the arms of the robbers were all piled up at the distance of ten or twelve paces out of their reach, there was no difficulty in securing the mastery of the field. We tied our horses to a tree, and drew near, as softly as possible, to the spot where the robbers were seated. They were debating with some impetuosity, and their vociferous argument was all in favour of our covert attack. We got possession of their arms before they had any suspicion of us. But the enemy was nearer than they imagined: too near to miss aim, and they were all stretched lifeless on the ground.

During the conflict the candle went out, so that we proceeded in our business by guess-work. We were not remiss, however, in unbinding the prisoners, of whom fear had got such complete possession, that they had not their wits enough about them to thank us for what we had done for them. It must be allowed that they could not at first distinguish whether they were to consider us as their deliverers, or as a fresh gang who had taken them out of one furnace to cast them hissing into another. But we recovered their spirits by the assurance, that we should lodge them safely in a public-house which Ambrose mentioned as not being more than half a mile off, whence they might take all necessary measures to pursue their journey in whatever direction they thought proper. After these words of comfort, which seemed to sink deep, we placed them in their carriage, and conducted them out of the

wood, holding their mules by the bridle. Our clerical friends instituted a ghostly visitation to the pockets of the vanquished banditti. Our next step was to recover Don Alphonso's horse. We also took to ourselves the steeds of the robbers, waiting as they were to be released from the trees to which they were tied near the field of battle. With this extensive cavalcade we followed brother Antony, mounted on one of the mules, and conducting the carriage to the inn, whither we did not arrive in less than two hours, though he had pledged his credit that the distance from the wood was very short.

We knocked roughly at the door. Every living creature was napping, except the fleas. The landlord and landlady got on their clothes in a hurry, and where not at all annoyed at finding their rest disturbed by the arrival of an equipage, which promised to do more for the good of the house than it eventually did. The whole inn was lighted up in an instant. Don Alphonso and the stage-bred son of Lucinda lent their assistance to the gentleman and lady in alighting from the carriage, and acted as their ushers in leading the way to the room prepared for them by the landlord. Compliments flew backwards and forwards like shuttlecocks; but we were not a little astonished at discovering the Count de Polan himself and his daughter Seraphina, in the persons we had just rescued. It would be difficult to represent by words the surprise of that lady, as well as of Don Alphonso, when they recognized each other's features. The count took no notice of it, his attention being engrossed by other matters. He set about relating to us in what manner the robbers had attacked him, and how they secured his daughter and himself, after having killed his postilion, a page, and a valet-de-chambre. He ended with declaring how deeply he felt his obligation; and that if we would call upon him at Toledo, where he should be in a month, we should judge for ourselves whether he felt as a grateful heart ought to feel.

His lordship's daughter was not backward in her acknowledgments for her timely rescue; and as we were of opinion, that is, Raphael and myself, that we should do a good turn to Don Alphonso by giving him an opportunity of a minute's private parley with the young widow, we contrived to keep the Count de Polan in play. Lovely

Seraphina, said Don Alphonso to the lady in a low voice, I no longer lament over the lot which obliges me to live like a man banished from civil society, since I have been so fortunate as to assist in the important service just rendered you. What then! answered she, with a sigh, is it you who have saved my life and honour? Is it to you that we are so indebted, myself equally with my father? Ah! Don Alphonso, why were you the instrument of my brother's death? She said no more upon the subject; but he conceived clearly by these words, and by the tone in which they were pronounced, that if he was over head and ears in love with Seraphina, she was equally out of her depth in the same passion.

BOOK THE SIXTH

CHAPTER I

THE FATE OF GIL BLAS AND HIS COMPANIONS AFTER THEY TOOK LEAVE OF THE COUNT DE POLAN. ONE OF AMBROSE'S NOTABLE CONTRIVANCES SET OFF BY THE MANNER OF ITS EXECUTION

THE Count de Polan, after having exhausted half the night in thanking us, and protesting that we might reckon upon his substantial acknowledgments, sent for the landlord to consult him on the best method of getting safely to Turis, whither it was his intention to go. We had nothing to do with this nobleman's further progress, and therefore left him to take his own measures. Our departure from the inn was now resolved on; and we followed Lamela like sheep after the bell-wether.

After two hours' travelling, the day overtook us near Campillo. We made as expeditiously as possible for the mountains between that hamlet and Requena. There we wore out the day in taking our rest and reckoning up our stock, which the spoil of the robbers had considerably replenished, to the amount of more than three hundred pistoles, the lawful ravage of their pockets. We began our march again with the setting-in of the night; and on the

following morning reached the frontier of Valencia in safety. We got quietly into the first wood that offered as a shelter. The inmost recesses of it were best suited to our purpose, and led us on by winding paths to a spot where a rivulet of transparent water was meandering in its slow and silent course, to incorporate with the waters of Guadalaviar. The refreshing shade afforded by the foliage, and the rich pasturage in which our toil-worn beasts so much delighted, would have fixed this for the place of our halting, if our resolution had not been previously taken to that effect.

We therefore alighted, and were preparing to pass the day very pleasantly, but a good breakfast was amongst the foremost of our intended pleasures; and we found that there was very little ammunition left. Bread was beginning to be a nonentity; and our bottle was becoming an evidence of the material system, mere carnal leather without a vivifying soul. Gentlemen, said Ambrose, scenery and the picturesque have but hungry charms for me, unless Bacchus and Ceres preside over the landscape. Our provisions must be lengthened out. For this purpose, away post I to Xelva. It is a very pretty town, not more than two leagues off. I shall soon make this little excursion. Speaking after this manner, he slung the bottle and the wallet over a horse's back, leaped merrily into his seat, and shot out of the wood with a rapidity which seemed to bid fair for a speedy return.

He did not, however, come back quite so soon as he had given us reason to expect. More than half the day had elapsed; nay, night herself was already pranking up her dun and gloomy wings, to overshadow the thicket with a denser horror, when we saw our purveyor once again, whose long stay was beginning to give us some uneasiness. Our extreme wishes were lame and impotent, compared with the abundance of his stores. He not only produced the bottle filled with some excellent wine, and the wallet stuffed with game and poultry ready dressed, to say nothing of bread; the horse was laden besides with a large bundle of stuffs, of which we could make neither head nor tail. He took notice of our wonder, and said with a smile: I will lay a wager, neither Don Raphael nor all the colleges of soothsayers upon earth can guess why I have bought

these articles. With this fling at our dulness, we untied the bundle, and lectured on the intrinsic value of what we had been considering only as an empty pageant. In the inventory was a cloak and a black gown of trailing dimensions; doublets, breeches, and hose to correspond; an inkstand and writing paper, such as a secretary of state need not be ashamed of; a key, such as a treasurer might carry; a great seal and green wax, such as a chancellor might affix to his decrees. When he had at length exhausted the display of his bargains, Don Raphael observed in a bantering tone—Faith and troth, Master Ambrose, it must be confessed that you have made a good sensible speculation. But pray, how do you mean to turn the penny on your purchase? Let me alone for that, answered Lamela. All these things cost me only ten pistoles, and it shall go hard but they bring us in above five hundred. The tens in five hundred are fifty; a good improvement of money, my masters! I am not a man to burden myself with a trumpery pedlar's pack; and to prove to you that I have not been making ducks and drakes of our joint stock, I will let you into the secret of a plan which has just taken birth in my pericranium.

After having laid in my stock of bread, I went into a cook's shop, where I ordered a range of partridges, chickens, and young rabbits, half-a-dozen of each, to be put instantly on the spit. While these relishing little articles were roasting, in came a man in a violent passion, open-mouthed against the coarse conduct of a tradesman to his consequential self. This faggot of fury observed to the lord paramount of the dripping-pan: By St James! Samuel Simon is the most wrong-headed retail dealer in the town of Xelva. He has just insulted me in his own shop before his customers. The skinflint would not trust me for six ells of cloth, though he knows very well that my credit is as good as the bank, and that no one could say he ever lost anything by me. Are not you delighted with the outlandish monster? He has no objection to getting people of fashion on his books. He had rather toss up heads or tails with them, than oblige a plain citizen in an honest way, and be paid in full at the time appointed. What a strange whim! But he is an infernal Jew. He will be taken in some day or other! All the merchants on the

Exchange are lying in wait to catch him upon the hip; and his disgrace or ruin will be nuts to me.

While this reptile of the warehouse was thus spitting his spite and blurting out many other ill-natured inuendos, there came over me a sort of astrological anticipation that I should be lord of the ascendant over this Samuel Simon. My friend, said I to the man who was complaining against that hawker of damaged goods, of what character is the strange fellow you are talking about? Of a confoundedly bad character, answered he in a pet. Depend on it, he is one of the most extortionate usurers in existence, though with the affectation of not letting his left hand know what his right gives away in charity. He was a Jew, and has turned Catholic; but rip your way into his heart if he has any, and you will find him still as inveterate a Jew as ever Pilate was. As for his conversion it was all in the way of trade.

I took in with greedy ear the whole invective of the shop-keeping declaimant, and failed not, on coming out of the eating-house, to inquire for Samuel Simon's residence. A person directed me to the part of the town, and there was no difficulty in finding out the house. It was not enough to skim my eye cursorily over his shop. I peered into every hole and corner of it; and my imagination, always on the alert when any profit is to be picked up, has already engendered a rogue's trick, which only waits the period of gestation, when it may turn out a bantling not unworthy to be fathered by the sanctimonious servant of Signor Gil Blas. Straightway went I to the ready-made warehouse, where I bought these dresses, into which we may stuff an inquisitor, a notary, and an alguazil, and play the parts in the spirit of the solemn offices they represent.

Ah! my dear Ambrose, interrupted Don Raphael, transported with rapture at the suggestion, what a wonderful idea! a glorious scheme indeed! I am quite jealous of the contrivance. Willingly would I blot out the proudest quarter from my escutcheon, to have owned an effort of genius so transcendent. Yes, Lamela, I see, my friend, all the rich invention of the design, and you need be at no loss for instruments to carry it into effect. You want two good actors to play up to you; and you have not far to look for them. You have yourself a face that can look sancti-

fied, magisterial, or blood-thirsty at will, and may do very well to represent the inquisition. My character shall be that of the notary; and Signor Gil Blas, if he pleases, may enact the alguazil. Thus are the persons of the drama distributed: to-morrow we will play the piece, and I will pledge myself for its success, bating one of those unlucky chance medleys, which turn awry the currents of the most pithy and momentous enterprises.

As yet Don Raphael's masterpiece of roguery had made but a clumsy impression on my plodding brain; but the argument of the fable was developed at supper-time, and the hinge upon which it turned was, to my mind, of an ingenious contrivance. After having despatched part of our game, and bled our bottle to the last stage of evacuation, we stretched our length upon the grass, and soon fell fast asleep. Up with you! up with you! was the alarum of Signor Ambrose, as the day began to dawn. People who have a great enterprise on hand ought not to indulge themselves in indolence. A plague upon you, master inquisitor, said Don Raphael, rubbing his eyes, you are confounded early on the move! It is as good as an order for execution to master Samuel Simon. Many a true word is spoken in jest, replied Lamela. Nay, you shall know more, added he with a sarcastic grin. I dreamt last night that I was plucking the hairs out of his beard. Was not that a left-handed dream for him, master secretary? These pleasant hits were followed by a thousand others, which called forth new bursts of merriment. Our breakfast passed off with the utmost gaiety; and when it was over, we made our arrangements for the pageant we had got up. Ambrose arrayed himself in sables, as befitted so ghostly an instrument for the suppression of vice. We also took to our official habits; nor has the dignity of magistracy been often more gravely represented than by Don Raphael and myself. The making up of our persons was rather a tedious operation; for it was later than two o'clock in the afternoon when we sallied from the wood to attend our call at Xelva. It is true, there was no hurry, since the play was not to begin till the setting-in of the evening. That being the case, we jogged on leisurely, and stopped at the gates of the town till the day was closed.

At that eventful hour, we left our horses where they were,

to the care of Don Alphonso, who was very well satisfied to have so humble a cast in the distribution. As for Don Raphael, Ambrose, and myself, our first visit was not to Samuel Simon in person, but to a tavern-keeper who lived very near him. His reverence the inquisitor walked foremost. In went he to the bar, and said gravely to the landlord: Master, I want to speak a word with you in private. The obsequious publican shewed us into a room, where Lamela, now that we had got him to ourselves, said: I have the honour to be an unworthy member of the holy office, and am come here on a business of very great importance. At this intimation, the man of liquor turned pale, and answered in a tremulous tone that he was not conscious of having given any umbrage to the holy inquisition. True, replied Ambrose, with encouraging affability; neither do we meditate any harm against you. Heaven forbid, that august tribunal, too hasty in its punishments, should make no distinction between guilt and innocence. It is unrelenting, but always just: to become obnoxious to its vengeance, you must have earned its displeasure by wickedness or contumacy. Be satisfied therefore that it is not you who bring me to Xelva, but a certain dealer and chapman, by name Samuel Simon. A very ugly story about him has come round to us. He is still a Jew in his heart, they say; and has only embraced Christianity from sordid and secular motives. I command you, in the name of the tremendous court I represent, to tell me all you know about that man. Beware how you are induced by good neighbourhood, or possibly by close friendship, to gloss over and palliate his errors; for, I warn you authoritatively, if I detect the slightest prevarication in your evidence, you are yourself even as one of the abandoned and accursed? Where is my secretary? pursued he, turning down towards Don Raphael. Sit down and do your duty.

Mr Secretary, with his paper already in his hand and his pen behind his ear, took his seat most pompously, and made ready to take down the landlord's deposition; who promised solemnly on his part not to suppress one tittle of the real fact. So far, so good! said the worshipful commissioner; we have only to proceed in our examination. You will only just answer my questions; but do not interlard

your replies with any comments of your own. Do you often see Samuel Simon at church? I never thought of looking for him, said the drawer of corks; but I do not know that I ever saw him there in my life. Very good! cried the inquisitor. Write down that the defendant never goes to church. I do not say so, your worship, answered the landlord, I only say that I never happened to see him there. We may have been at church together and yet not have come across each other. My good friend, replied Lamela, you forget that you are deposing to facts, and not arguing. Remember what I told you; contempt of court is a heinous offence. You are to give a sound and discreet evidence; every iota of what makes against him, and not a word in his favour, if you knew volumes. If that is your practice, O upright and impartial judge, resumed our host, my testimony will scarcely be worth the trouble of taking. I know nothing about the tradesman you are inquiring after; and therefore can tell neither good nor harm of him: but if you wish to examine into the history of his private life, I will run and call Gaspard, his apprentice, whom you may question as much as you please. The lad comes and takes his glass here sometimes with his friends. Bless us, what a tongue! He will rip up all the minutest actions of his master's life, and find employment for your secretary till his wrist aches, take my word for it.

I like your open dealing, said Ambrose with a nod of approbation. To point out a man so capable of speaking to the bad morals of Simon, is an instance of Christian charity as well as of religious zeal. I shall report you very favourably to the inquisition. Make haste, therefore; go and fetch this Gaspard, of whom you speak; but do the thing cautiously, so that his master may have no suspicion of what is going forward. The multiplier of scores acquitted himself of his commission with due diligence and laudable privacy. Our little shopman came along with him. The youth had a tongue with a tang, and was just the sort of fellow that we wanted. Welcome, my good young man! said Lamela. You behold in me an inquisitor, appointed by that venerable body to collect informations against Samuel Simon, on an accusation of still adhering to Judaism in his secret devotions. You are an inmate of his family, consequently you must be an eye-witness to many of his most

private transactions. It probably may be unnecessary to warn you, that you are obliged in conscience, and by fear of punishment, to declare all you know about him, notwithstanding any promise to the contrary, when I order you so to do on the part of the holy inquisition. May it please your reverence, answered the plodding little rascal, I am quite ready to satisfy your heart's desire on that head, without being commanded thereto in the name of the holy office. If ever my acquittal was to depend on my master's character of me, I am persuaded that my chance would be a sorry one; and for that reason, I shall serve him as he would serve me. And I may tell you in the first place, that he is a fly-by-night whose proceedings it is no easy matter to take measure of; a man who puts on all the starch formalities of an inveterate religionist, but at bottom has not a spark of principle in his composition. He goes every evening dangling after a little girl no better than she should be . . . . I am vastly glad indeed to find that, interrupted Ambrose, because I plainly perceive, by all you have been telling me, that he is a man of corrupt morals and licentious practices. But answer point by point to the questions I shall put to you. It is above all on the subject of religion that I am commissioned to inquire into his sentiments and conduct. Pray tell me, do you eat much pork at your house? I do not think, answered Gaspard, that we have seen it at table twice in the year that I have lived with him. Better and better! replied the paragon of inquisitors: write down in legible characters that they never eat pork in Samuel Simon's family. But as a set-off against that, doubtless a joint of lamb is served up every now and then? Yes, every now and then, rejoined the apprentice; we killed one for our own consumption about last Easter. The season is pat and to the purpose, cried the ecclesiastical commissioner. Come, write down, that Simon keeps the passover. This goes on merrily to a complete conviction; and it seems, we have got a good serviceable information here.

Tell me again, my friend, pursued Lamela, whether you have not often seen your master fondle young children. A thousand times, answered Gaspard. When he sees the little urchins playing about before the shop, if they happen to be pretty, he calls them in and makes much of them.

Write that down, be sure you write that down! interrupted the inquisitor. Samuel Simon is very grievously suspected of lying in wait for Christian children, and enticing them into his den to circumcise them. Vastly well! vastly well, indeed, Master Simon! you will have an account to settle with the society for the suppression of Judaism, take my word for it. Do not take it into your savage head that such bloody sacrifices are to be perpetrated with impunity. A pretty use you make of baptism and shaving! Cheer up, religious Gaspard, thou foremost of elect apprentices! Make a full confession of all thy master's sins; complete thine honest testimony by telling us how this simular of a Catholic is more than ever wedded to his Jewish customs and ceremonies. Is it not a fact, that one day in the week he sits with his hands before him, and will not even perform the most necessary offices for himself? No, answered Gaspard, I have not exactly observed that. What comes nearest to it is that on some days he shuts himself up in his closet, and stays there a long time. Ay! now we have it, exclaimed the commissary. He keeps the sabbath, or I am not an inquisitor. Note that particularly, officer; note that he observes the fast of the sabbath most superstitiously! Out upon him! What a shocking fellow! One question more, and his business is done. Is not he always parleying about Jerusalem? Pretty often indeed, replied our informer. He knows the Old Testament by heart, and tells us how the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. The very thing! resumed Ambrose. Secretary! be sure you do not neglect that feature of the case. Write, in letters of an inch long, that Samuel Simon has contracted with the devil for the rebuilding of the temple, and that he is plotting day and night for the re-establishment of his nation. That is all I want to know; and it is labour in vain to pursue the examination any further. What Gaspard, in the spirit of truth and charity, has deposed, would be sufficient to make a bonfire of all Jewry.

When the august mouth-piece of the holy tribunal had sifted the little scoundrelly apprentice after this manner, he told him he might go about his business; at the same time commanding him, under the severest penalties of the inquisition, not to say a word to his master about what was going forward. Gaspard promised implicit obedience, and

marched off. We were not long in coming after him: our procession from the inn was as grave and solemn as our pilgrimage thereunto, till we knocked at Samuel Simon's door. He opened it in person. Three figures such as ours might have dumbfounded a better man; but his face was as long as a lawsuit, when Lamela, our spokesman, said to him in a tone of authority: Master Samuel, I command you in the name of the holy inquisition, whose delegate I have the honour to be, to give me the key of your closet without murmur or delay. I want to see if I cannot find wherewithal to corroborate certain hints which have been communicated to us respecting you.

The son of commerce, aghast at these sounds of melancholy import, reeled two steps backward, just as if some one had given him a blow in the breadbasket. Far from smelling a rat in this pleasant trick of ours, he fancied in good earnest that some secret enemy had made him an object of suspicion to the holy hue-and-cry; and it might possibly have happened that, from being rather clumsy at his new duties as a Christian, he might be conscious of having laid himself open to serious animadversion. However that might be, I never saw a man look more foolish. He did as he was ordered without saying nay; and opened all his lock-up places with the sheepish acquiescence of a man, who stood in awe of an ecclesiastical rap on the knuckles. At least, said Ambrose as he went in, at least you are not a contumacious oppugner of our resistless mandates. But withdraw into another room, and leave me to fulfil the duties of my station without profane observers. Samuel did not set his face against this command any more than against the first: but kept himself quiet in his shop, while we went all three of us into his closet, where, without loss of time, we laid an embargo on his cash. It was no difficult matter to find it; for it lay in an open coffer, and in much larger quantity than we could carry away. There were a great many bags heaped up; but all in silver. Gold would have been more to our mind; but, as robbers must not be choosers any more than beggars, we were obliged to yield to the necessity of the case. Not only did we line our pockets with ducats; but the most unsearchable parts of our dress were made the receptacles of our filchings. Yet was there no outward shew of the heavy burden under

which we tottered; thanks to the cunning contrivance of Ambrose and Don Raphael, who proved that there is nothing like being master of one's trade.

We marched out of the closet, after having feathered our nests pretty warmly; and then, for a reason which the reader will have no great difficulty in guessing, the worshipful inquisitor produced his padlock, and fixed it on the door with his own hands: he affixed moreover his own seal, and then said to Simon: Master Samuel, I forbid you, in the name of the holy inquisition, to touch either this padlock or this seal, which it is your bounden duty to hold sacred, since it is the authentic seal of our holy office. I shall return hither this time to-morrow, then and here to open my commission, and provisionally to take off the interdict. With this injunction, he ordered the street door to be opened, and we made our escape after the processional manner, out of our wits with joy. As soon as we had marched about fifty yards, we began to mend our pace into such a quick step, aggravated by degrees into a leap and a bound, that we were almost like vaulters and tumblers, in spite of the weight we carried. We were soon out of town; and mounting our horses once more, pushed forward towards Segorba, with many a pious ejaculation to the God Mercury, on the happy issue of so bold an attempt.

CHAPTER II

THE DETERMINATION OF DON ALPHONSO AND GIL BLAS AFTER THIS ADVENTURE

We travelled all night, according to our modest and unobtrusive custom; so that we found ourselves at sunrise near a little village two leagues from Segorba. As we were all tired to death, it was agreed unanimously to strike out of the highway, and rest under the shade of some willows, which we saw at the foot of a little hill, about ten or twelve hundred yards from the village, where it did not seem expedient for us to halt. These willows furnished us with an agreeable retreat, by the side of a little brook which bubbled as it washed their roots. The place struck our fancy, and we resolved to pass the day there. We unbridled

our horses, and turned them out to grass, stretching our own gentle limbs on the soft sod. There we courted the drowsy god of innocent repose for a while, and then rummaged to the bottom of our wallet and our wine-skin. After an ecclesiastical breakfast, we counted up our ten tithes of Samuel Simon's money; and it mounted to a round three thousand ducats. So that with such a sum and what we had before, it might be said, without boasting, that we knew how to make both ends meet.

As it was necessary to go to market, Ambrose and Don Raphael, throwing off their dresses now the play was over, said that they would take that office conjointly on themselves: the adventure at Xelva had only sharpened their wit, and they had a mind to look about Segorba, just to make the experiment whether any opportunity might offer of striking another stroke. You have nothing to do, added the heir of Lucinda's wit and wisdom, but to wait for us under these willows: we shall not be long before we are with you again. Signor Don Raphael, exclaimed I with a horse-laugh, tell us rather to wait for you under a most substantial tree; the gallows. If you once leave us, we are in a month's mind that we shall not see you again till the day after the fair. This suspicion of our honour goes against the grain, replied Signor Ambrose; but we deserve that our characters should suffer in your esteem. It is but reason that you should distrust our purity, after the affair at Valladolid, and should fancy that we shall make it no more a matter of conscience to play at the devil take the hindmost with you, than with the party that we left in the lurch in that town. Yet you deceive yourselves egregiously. The gang upon whom we turned the tables were people of very bad character, and their company began to be disreputable to us. Thus far justice must be done to the members of our profession, that there is no bond in all civilized life less liable to be broken by personal and private interest; but when there are no feelings in common, our good understanding will be the worse for wear, as it happens among other descriptions of men. Wherefore, Signor Gil Blas, I entreat you, and Signor Don Alphonso as well as you, to be somewhat more liberal in your construction of us, and to set your hearts at rest respecting Don Raphael's and my whim about going to Segorba.

It is the easiest thing in the world, observed Lucinda's hopeful brat, to quash all subject of uneasiness on that score: they have only to remain treasurers of the exchequer, and they will have a sufficient pledge in their hands for our return. You see, Signor Gil Blas, that we are all fair and above-board. You shall both hold security for our reappearance, and you may rest assured that for Ambrose and myself, we shall set off without the slightest misgiving of your taking to your heels with so valuable a deposit. After so substantial a proof of our good faith, will you not place implicit confidence in us? Yes, gentlemen, said I, and you may do at once whatever seems good in your own eyes. They took their departure immediately, carrying the bottle and the wallet along with them, and left me under the willows with Don Alphonso, who said to me after they were out of sight: Now is the time, Signor Gil Blas, now is the time to open my heart to you. I am angry with myself for having been so easily prevailed on to herd thus far with these two knaves. You have no idea how many times I have quarrelled with myself on that score. Yesterday evening, while I was watching the horses, a thousand mortifying reflections rushed upon my mind. I thought it did not become a young man of honourable principles to live among such scurvy fellows as Don Raphael and Lamela; that if by ill-luck some day or other, and many a more unlikely thing has happened, the success of our swindling tricks should throw us into the hands of justice, I might sustain the shame of being tried with them as a reputed thief, and undergoing the disgraceful sentence of the law. These frightful thoughts present themselves incessantly to my imagination, and I will own to you that I have determined, as the only means of escape from the contamination of their bad actions, to part from them for ever. I can scarcely suppose that you will disapprove of my design. No, I promise you, answered I: though you have seen me perform the part of the alguazil in Samuel Simon's comedy, do not fancy that such pieces as those are got up to my taste. I take heaven to witness that while acting in so witty a scene, I said to myself: Faith and troth, master Gil Blas, if justice should come and lay hold of you by the wezand at this moment, you would well deserve the penitential wages of your

iniquity. I feel therefore no more disposed than yourself, Don Alphonso, to tarry longer in such bad company; and if you think well of it, I will bear you company. When these gentlemen come back, we will demand a balancing of the accounts, and to-morrow morning, or even to-night before to-morrow, we will make our bow to them.

The lovely Seraphina's lover approved my proposal. Let us get to Valencia, said he, and we will embark for Italy, where we shall be able to enter into the service of the Venetian republic. Will it not be far better to take up the profession of arms, than to lead such a dastardly and disreputable life as we are now engaged in? We shall even be in a condition to make a very handsome figure with the money that will be coming to us. Not that I appropriate to myself without remorse a fund so unfairly established; but besides that necessity obliges me to it, if ever I acquire any property in my campaigns, I make a vow to indemnify Samuel Simon. I gave Don Alphonso to understand that my sentiments coincided with his own, and we resolved at once to separate ourselves from our companions on the following morning before daybreak. We were above the temptation of profiting by their absence, that is, of marching off in a hurry with the sum total of the finances: the confidence they had reposed in leaving us masters of the whole revenue, did not permit such a thought so much as to pass through our minds.

Ambrose and Don Raphael returned from Segorba just at the close of day. The first thing they told us was, that their journey had been propitious; for they had laid the corner-stone of a rascality which, to all appearance, would turn out still better than that of the evening before. And thereupon the son of Lucinda was going to put us in possession of the details; but Don Alphonso cut him short in his explanation, and declared at once his intention of parting company. I announced my own wish to do the same. To no purpose did they employ all their rhetoric, to prove to us the propriety of our accompanying them in their professional travels: we took leave of them the next morning, after having made an equal division of our cash, and pushed on towards Valencia.

CHAPTER III

AN UNFORTUNATE OCCURRENCE, WHICH TERMINATED TO THE HIGH DELIGHT OF DON ALPHONSO. GIL BLAS MEETS WITH AN ADVENTURE WHICH PLACES HIM ALL AT ONCE IN A VERY SUPERIOR SITUATION

We galloped on gaily as far as Bunol, where, as ill-luck would have it, we were obliged to stop. Don Alphonso was taken ill. His disorder was a high fever, with such an access of alarming symptoms, as put me in fear for his life. By the greatest mercy in the world, the place was not beset by a single physician, and I got clear off without any harm but my fright. He was quite out of danger at the end of three days, and with my nursing, his recovery was rapid and without relapse. He seemed to be very grateful for my attentions; and as we really and truly felt a liking for each other, we swore an eternal friendship.

At length we got on our journey again, in the constant determination, when we arrived at Valencia, of profiting by the first opportunity which might offer to go over into Italy. But heaven disposed of us differently. We saw at the gate of a fine castle some country people of both sexes making merry and dancing in a ring. We went near to be spectators of their revels; and Don Alphonso was never less prepared than for the surprise which all at once came over his senses. He found it was Baron Steinbach, who was as little backward in recognizing him, but ran up to him with open arms, and exclaimed, in accents of unbridled joy—Ah, Don Alphonso! is it you? What a delightful meeting! While search was making for you in every direction, chance presents you to my view.

My fellow-traveller dismounted immediately, and ran to embrace the baron, whose joy seemed to me of an extravagant nature. Come, my long-lost son, said the good old man, you shall now be informed of your own birth, and know the happy destiny that awaits you. As he uttered these words, he conducted him into the castle. I went in along with them; for while they were exchanging salutations, I had alighted and tied our horses to a tree. The lord of the castle was the first person whom we met. He

was about the age of fifty, and a very well-looking man. Sir, said Baron Steinbach as he introduced Don Alphonso, behold your son. At these words, Don Cæsar de Leyva, for by that title the lord of the castle was called, threw his arms round Don Alphonso's neck, and weeping with joy, muttered indistinctly, My dear son, know in me the author of your being. If I have for so long left you in ignorance of your birth and family, rest assured that the self-denial was mine in the most painful degree. I have a thousand times been ready to burst with anxiety, but it was impossible to act otherwise. I had married your mother from sheer attachment, for her origin was very inferior to mine. I lived under the control of an austere father, whose severity rendered it necessary to keep secret a marriage contracted without his sanction. Baron Steinbach, and he alone, was in my confidence: he brought you up at my request, and under my directions. At length my father is laid with his ancestors, and I can own you for my son and heir. This is not all; I can give you for a bride a young lady whose rank is on a level with my own. Sir, interrupted Don Alphonso, make me not pay too dear for the happiness you have just been throwing in my lap. May I not be told that I have the honour of being your son without being informed at the same time that you are determined to make me miserable? Ah, sir! be not more cruel than your own father. If he did not consent to the indulgence of your passion, at least he never compelled you to take another wife. My son, replied Don Cæsar, I have no wish to exercise a tyranny over your inclinations, which I spurned at in my own case. But have the good manners just to see the lady I design for you, that is all I require from your filial duty. Though a lovely creature and a very advantageous match, I promise never to force you into marriage. She is now in this castle. Follow me; you will be obliged to acknowledge that you have rarely seen a more attractive object. So saying, he led Don Alphonso into a room where I made myself one of the party with Baron Steinbach.

There was the Count de Polan with his two daughters, Seraphina and Julia, and Don Ferdinand de Leyva, his son-in-law, who was Don Cæsar's nephew. Don Ferdinand, as was mentioned before, had eloped with Julia, and it was on the occasion of the marriage between these two lovers that

the peasantry of the neighbourhood were collected on this day to congratulate the bride and bridegroom. As soon as Don Alphonso made his appearance, and his father had introduced him to the company, the Count de Polan rose from his chair and ran to embrace him, saying—Welcome, my deliverer! Don Alphonso, added he, addressing his discourse to him, observe the power of virtue over generous minds. Though you have killed my son, you have saved my life. I lay aside my resentment for ever, and give you that very Seraphina whose honour you protected from invasion. In so doing, my debt to you is paid. Don Cæsar's son was not wanting in acknowledgments to the Count de Polan, nor could he be otherwise than deeply affected by his goodness; and it may be doubted whether the discovery of his birth and parentage touched his felicity more nearly than the intelligence that he was the destined husband of Seraphina. This marriage was actually solemnized some days afterwards, to the entire satisfaction of all parties concerned.

As I was one of the Count de Polan's deliverers, this nobleman, who knew me again immediately, said that he would take upon himself the care of making my fortune. I thanked him for his liberality, but would not leave Don Alphonso, who made me steward of his household, and honoured me with his confidence. A few days after his marriage, still harping upon the trick which had been played to Samuel Simon, he sent me to return to that cozened shopkeeper all the money which had been filched from him. I went therefore to make restitution. This was setting up the trade of a steward, but beginning at the wrong end: they ought all of them to end with restitution; but nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand think it double trouble, and excuse themselves.

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